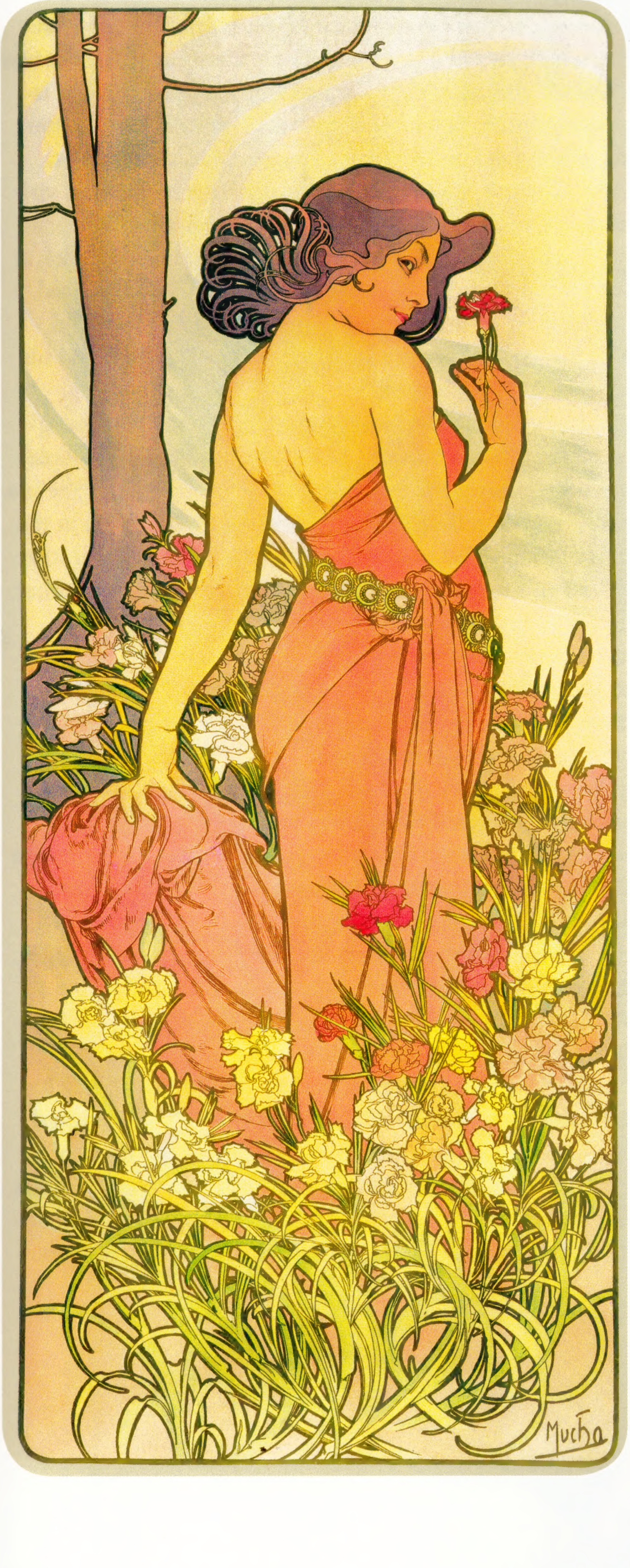
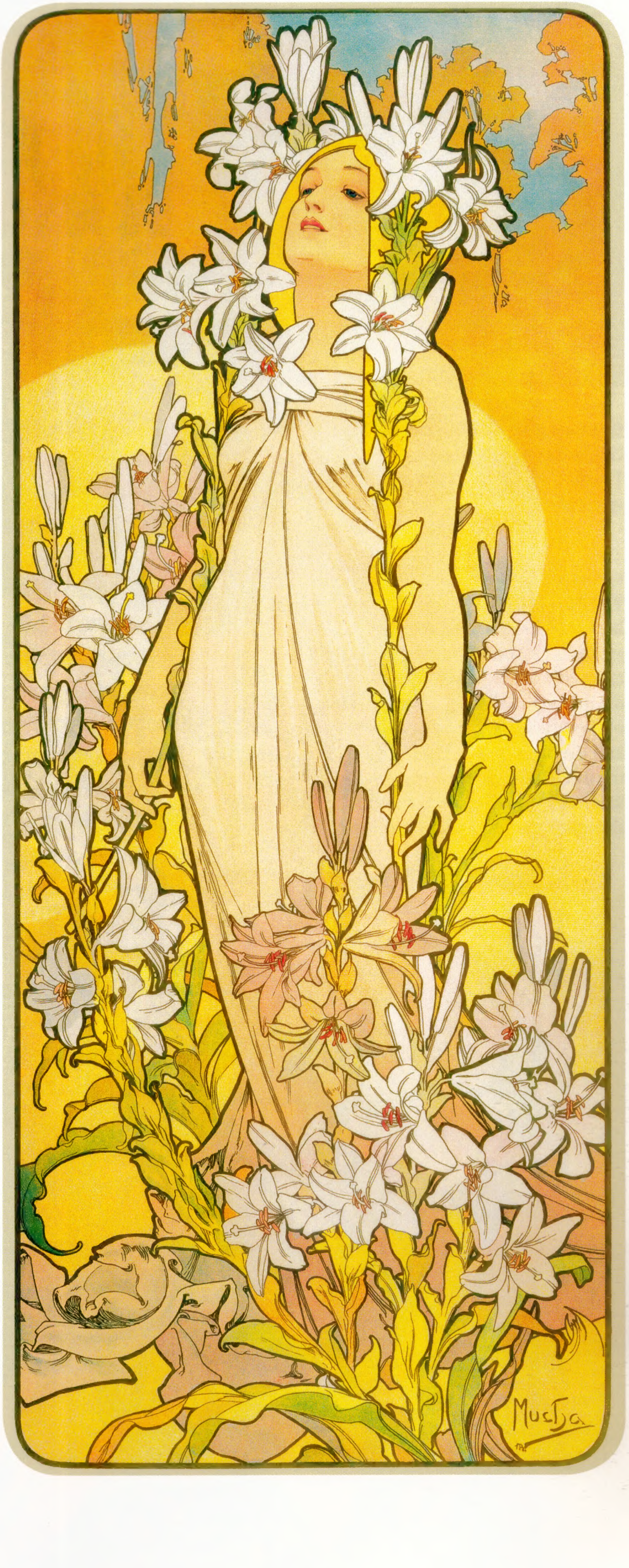
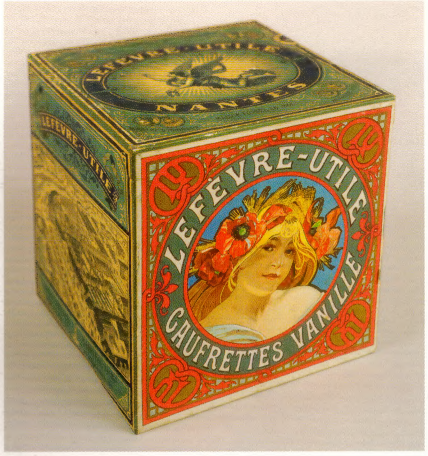


The Flowers: Carnation, 1898
Colour lithograph, 103.5 x 43.3 cm / 40¾ x 17 in.



The Flowers: Lily, 1898
Colour lithograph, 103.5 x 43.3 cm / 40¾ x 17 in.



Box for Lefèvre-Utile biscuits:
Gaufrettes Vanille, *c.* 1900
Tin box with colour-lithographed label,
19.3 x 18.3 x 17.5 cm / 7⅝ x 7¼ x 6⅞ in.

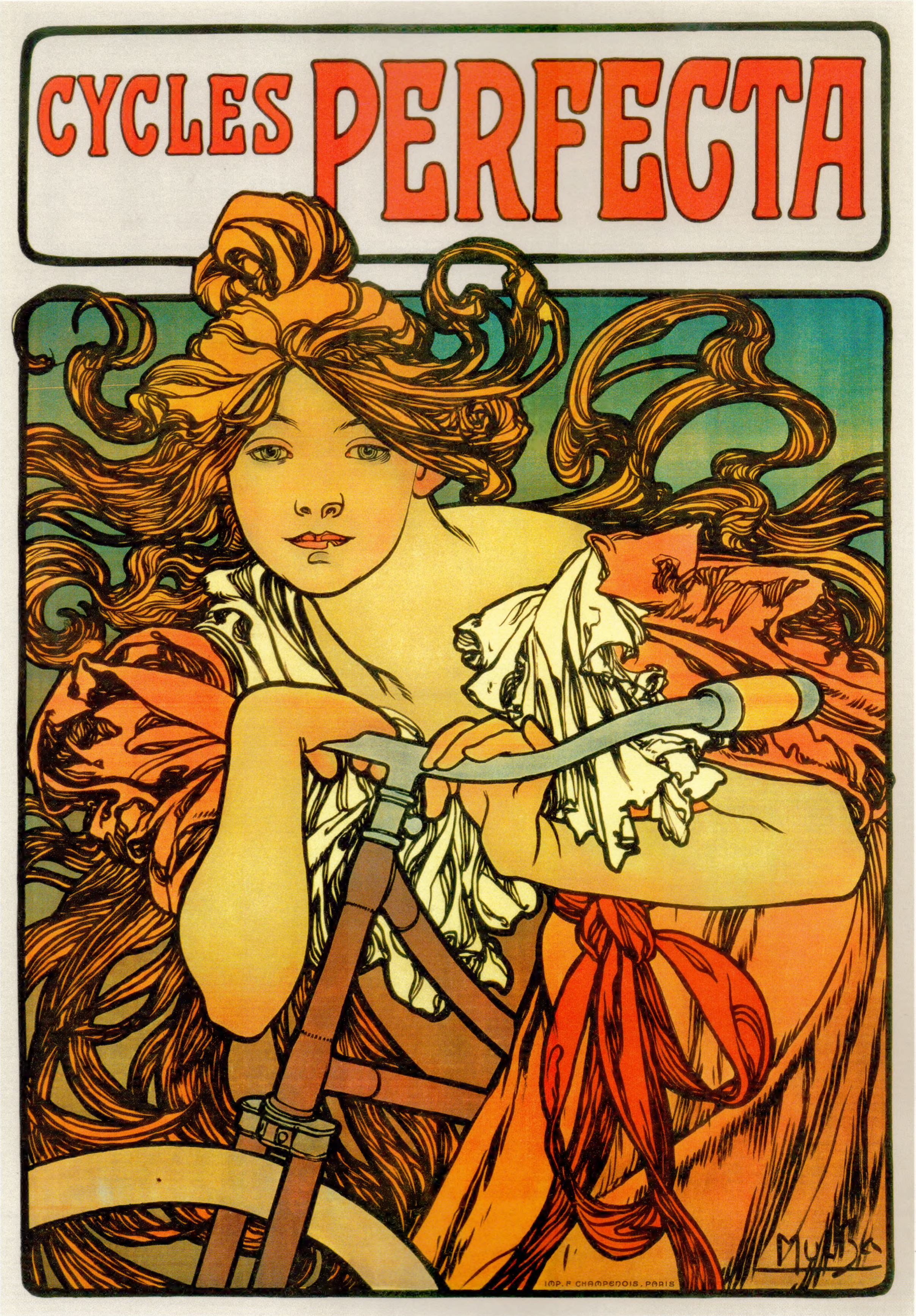
PAGES 44–45
The Flowers, 1898
In this series Mucha personified four flowers, attributing their visual impressions to different types of women as well as evoking the symbolic meaning of each from the traditional 'language of flowers'. Furthermore, in blending the women and the floral motifs together Mucha enhanced the decorative effect of the female figures, which was to be explored further in both *Documents décoratifs* (see pp. 62, 63) and *Figures décoratives*.

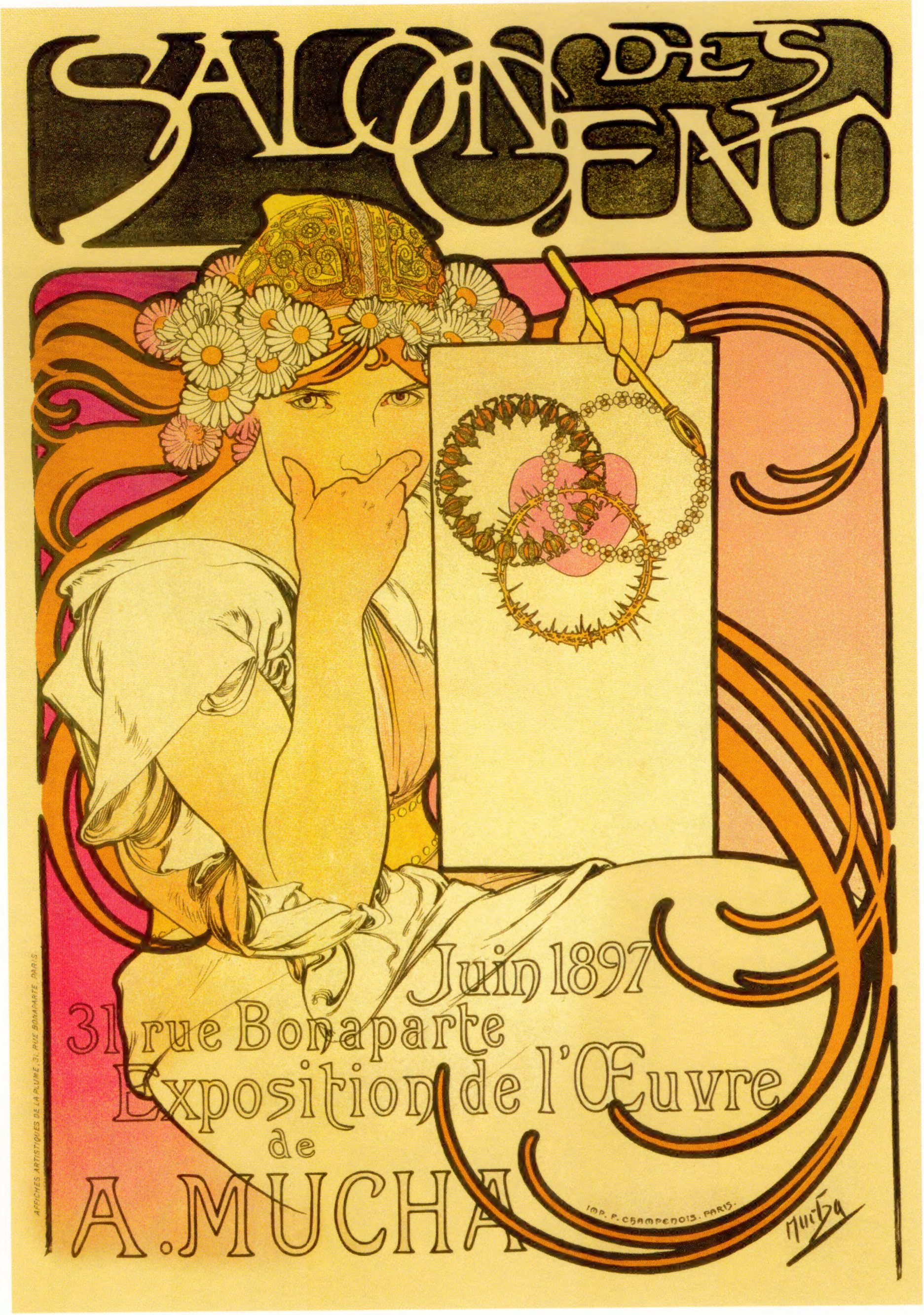
Having been invited by Deschamps, Mucha joined the Salon des Cent in 1896, and the following year he was given a major retrospective there (p. 48), showing a staggering 448 works. Concurrently, *La Plume* published a special issue devoted to Mucha, which served as the exhibition catalogue. The cover was designed by the artist himself and his design was used for many subsequent issues of the magazine. Furthermore, *La Plume* organised a travelling exhibition from this retrospective, which went on to Vienna, Prague, Munich, Brussels, London and New York, promoting Mucha internationally. This heightened visibility led to more exhibitions, publications and publicity, as well as the application of his designs to packaging and popular decorative objects. Looking back at *fin-de-siècle* Paris, Mucha wrote later: "My art, if I may call it that, crystallised. It was *en vogue*. Under the name of '*le style Mucha*' it spread to factories and workshops." He was now one of the most copied artists across the globe and his style became the hallmark of the era.

The great popularity of the Mucha style was supported by its instant recognisability and the allure of the 'Mucha Woman'. Seductive, inspirational, wholesome or comforting, her image forms the central part of Mucha's design. She is a realistic yet otherworldly beauty, unlike the crudely stylised features seen in the majority of contemporary posters. Her pose is flowing, often adorned with the arabesques of her long hair and sumptuous floral motifs, accompanied by other decorative details alluding to the theme, and thus she acts as a messenger to communicate the idea – i.e. the attractiveness of the products or the aesthetic pleasure of poetry and harmony found in nature – to the viewer. For his distinctive decorative scheme, Mucha synthesised a variety of ornamental motifs – Japanese, Rococo, Gothic, Celtic, Greek and Islamic – from his design reference books, including the seminal work by Owen Jones (1809–1874) from 1856, *The Grammar of Ornament* (the French edition was published in 1865).

On the whole, however, Mucha's style evolved organically from his Moravian and Slavic roots. In 1894 he employed Byzantine motifs for *Gismonda* mainly because of the play's Greek setting, but from 1896 onwards he integrated, regardless of the subject, traditional elements from his homeland into his designs, which manifest themselves as floral and other botanical motifs inspired by Moravian folk arts and crafts; as prominent discs evoking Byzantine icons (in Mucha's view Byzantine art was the home of Slavic civilisation); and also the curves and geometric patterns familiar in Czech Baroque churches. During his groundbreaking retrospective at the Salon des Cent in 1897, Mucha, distressed by press speculations about his exotic origins, turned to Sarah Bernhardt for help. Her statement appeared in *La France*, affirming that Monsieur Mucha was "a Czech from Moravia not only by birth and origin, but also by feeling, by conviction and by patriotism". To Mucha, his Czech identity far outweighed fame.

Cycles Perfecta, 1902
Colour lithograph, 53 x 35 cm / 20⅞ x 13⅞ in.

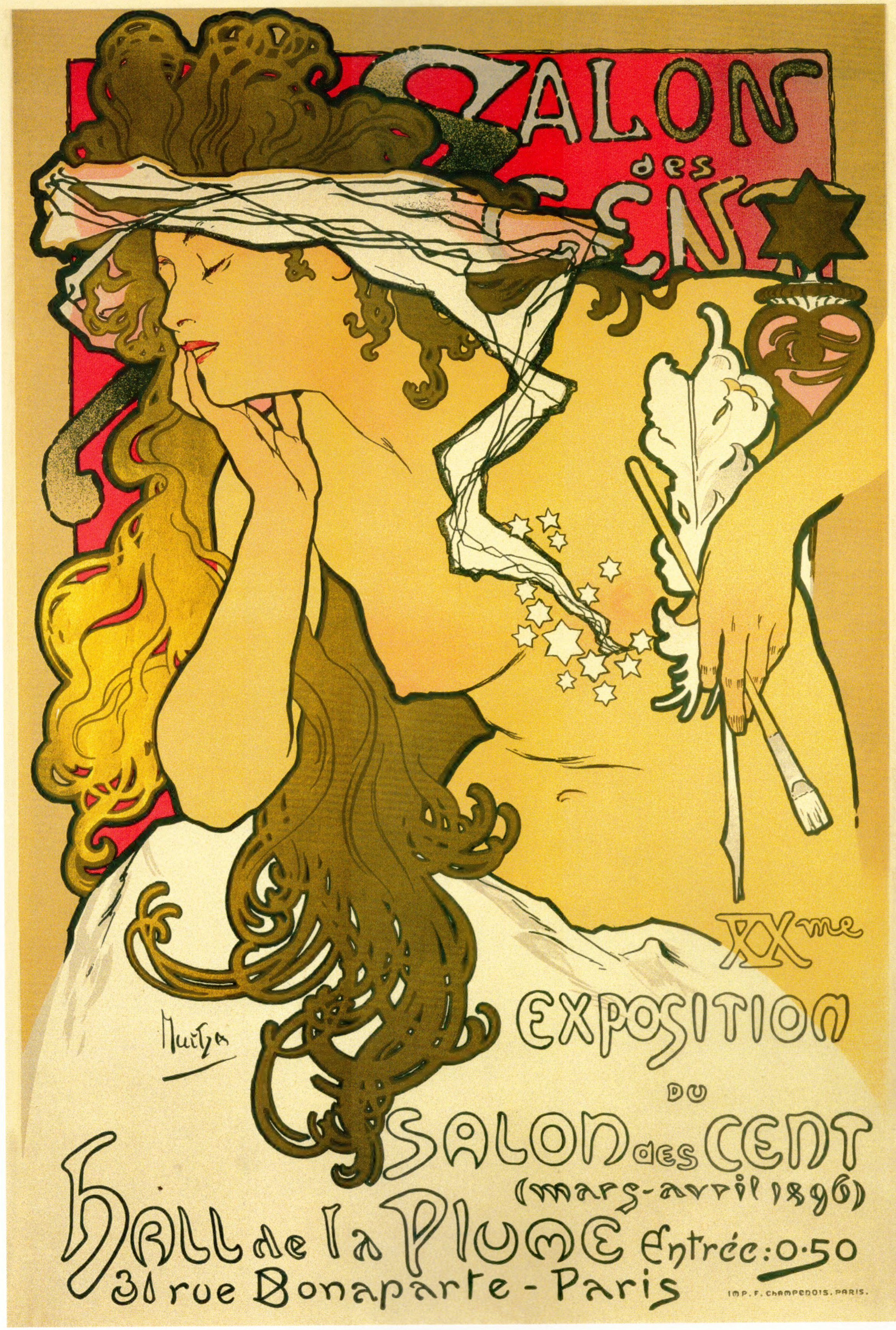

CYCLES PERFECTA
Mucha
IMP. F. CHAMPENOIS, PARIS

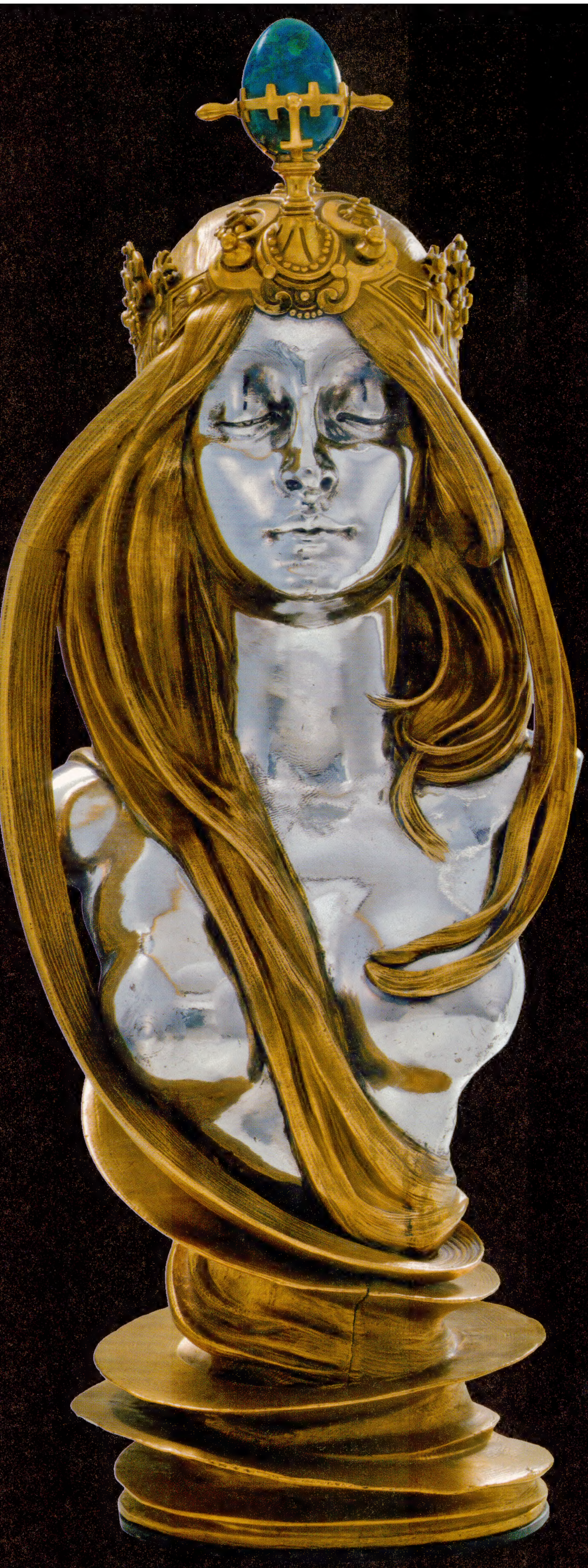

SALON DES CENT
Juin 1897
31 rue Bonaparte
Exposition de l'Œuvre
de
A. MUCHA
AFFICHES ARTISTIQUES DE LA PLUME 31, RUE BONAPARTE PARIS
IMP. F. CHAMPENOIS. PARIS.
Mucha

Salon des Cent Exhibition of the Work of A. Mucha, 1897
Colour lithograph, 66.2 x 46 cm / 26 x 18⅛ in.

In the course of designing this exhibition poster Mucha incorporated various Moravian elements into his decorative motifs, such as the embroidered folk cap worn by the girl and her daisy crown which evokes the meadows of his homeland. Additionally, the girl holds a pen and a picture which shows a heart in the middle of three intersecting garlands, composed of thorns, flowers and fruit, alluding to the fate of Mucha's homeland.

Salon des Cent 20th Exhibition, 1896
Colour lithograph, 63 x 43 cm / 24¾ x 16⅞ in.

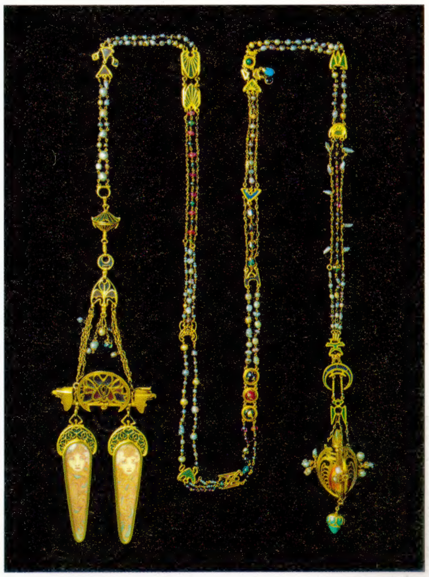

SALON des CENT
XXme
EXPOSITION
DU
SALON des CENT
(mars-avril 1896)
HALL de la PLUME Entrée: 0·50
31 rue Bonaparte - Paris
Mucha
IMP. F. CHAMPENOIS. PARIS.



Triumph in Paris, Sorrows of Bosnia

"It was midnight, and there I was all alone in my studio in the rue du Val-de-Grâce among my pictures, posters and panels. I became very excited. I saw my work adorning the salons of the highest society … I saw the books full of legendary scenes, floral garlands and drawings glorifying the beauty and tenderness of women. This was what my time, my precious time, was being spent on, when my nation was left to quench its thirst on ditch-water. And in my soul I saw myself sinfully misappropriating what belonged to my people." Thus did Mucha describe retrospectively in a letter to a friend his situation at the turn of 1899–1900. At the time he was reaching a new peak in his career with the approaching Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900 (April 15–November 12), which brought in numerous projects including commissions from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and important French manufacturers, as well as invitations to the various exhibitions. However, within Mucha the gap between his worldly success in the French capital and his patriotic aspirations – to serve his homeland with his art – was increasing. Furthermore, his artistic ambition was shifting to a grander vision under the influence of Freemasonry. A fraternal organisation, which he had joined in 1898, the society worked for the betterment of humanity through charitable works, human solidarity and the quest for higher intellectual, moral and spiritual values.

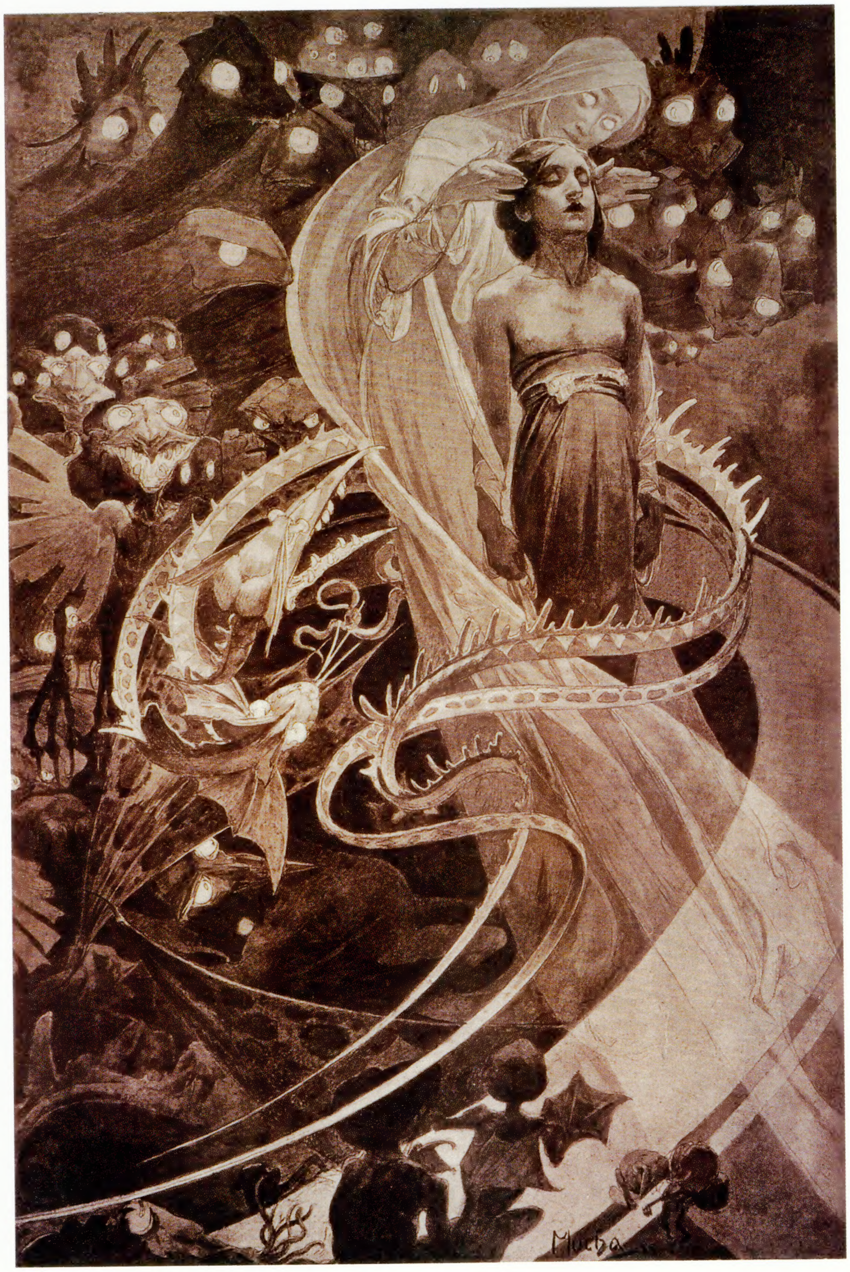
According to Mucha's account of his Masonic life published in *Stavba* (Prague, 1932), despite his early upbringing under Catholic teachings, which prohibited Freemasonry as a heresy, he had been drawn to it since the 1880s as a result of the influence of his former patron Count Eduard Khuen-Belasi who viewed its membership as "a great honour". In Paris, while exploring his spiritualist ideals, Mucha continued to be intrigued by this organisation. Then, in 1897, after meeting a Masonic businessman called Pierre Béziaux, Mucha decided to join the Freemasons. With Béziaux's help he was eventually accepted as an apprentice of Les Inséparables du Progrès, a lodge of the Grand Orient de France in Paris, on January 25, 1898. Originally founded in 1728 as the Première Grande Loge de France, the Grand Orient was the oldest and most significant Masonic order in Continental Europe. Its large membership included many influential politicians and thinkers along with an increasing number of middle-class members. In maintaining the spirit of the French Revolution – Liberty, Equality, Fraternity – as their motto, they were also an active political lobby, advocating 'progressive'



Ornamental Chain with Pendants, 1900
Gold, enamel, freshwater pearls, mother of pearl and semi-precious stones, (length) 159 cm / 62⅝ in.
Manufactured by Georges Fouquet, Paris, after Mucha's design

Designed by Mucha for Georges Fouquet, this ornamental chain was exhibited on the jeweller's stand at the Paris Exposition. A variety of gems was employed in the synthesis of decorative elements from Eastern and Western art, with Mucha thereby demonstrating his innovative approach to jewellery design.

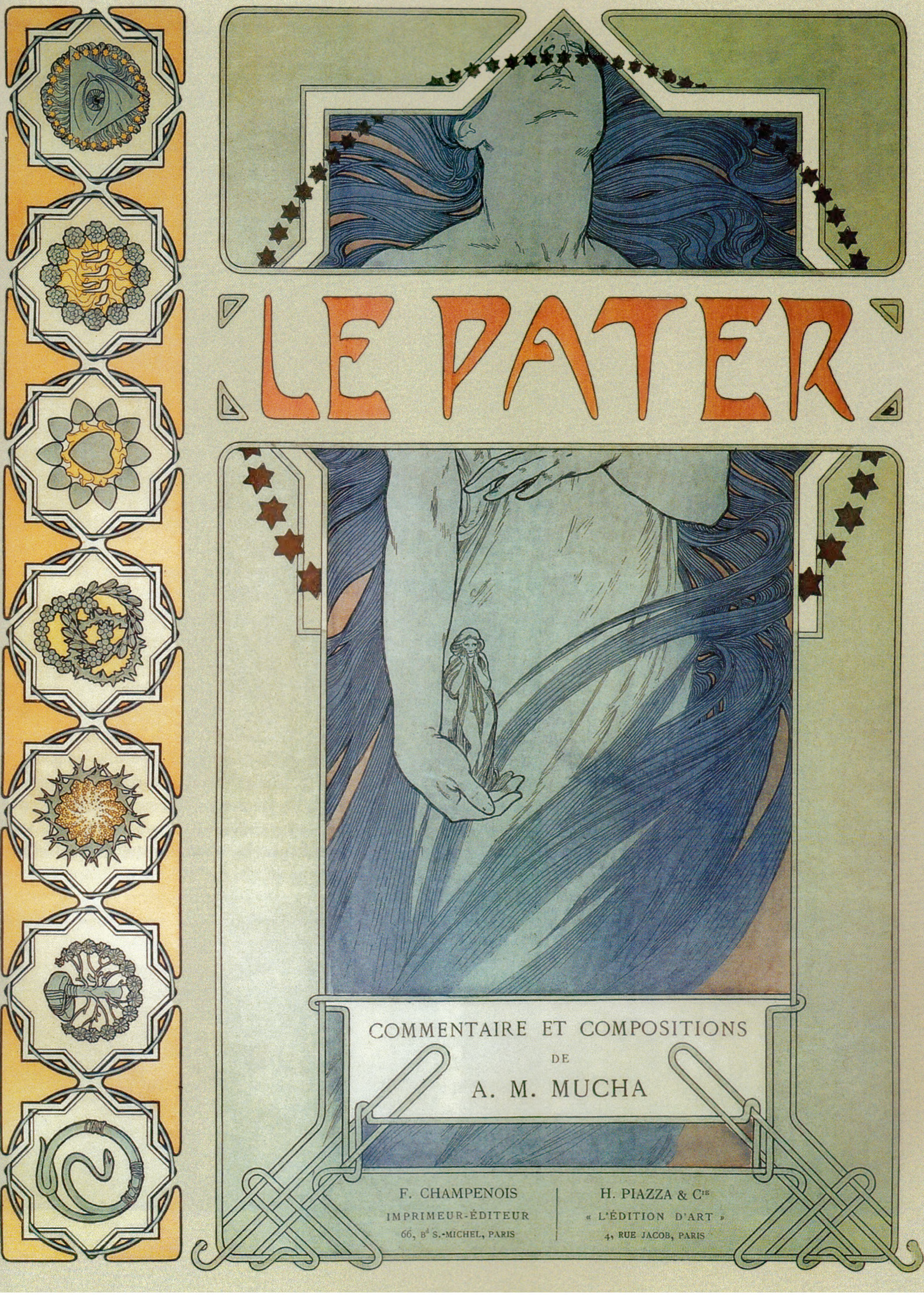
Nature, *c.* 1900
Bronze, silvering and crocidolite cat's eye, 70.7 x 28 x 27.5 cm / 27⅞ x 11 x 10⅞ in.
Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum



***Seventh allegorical page of* Le Pater**, 1899
'And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil'
Photogravure, 40.4 x 30.2 cm / 15⅞ x 11⅞ in.

Le Pater, 1899
Title-page for the illustrated book,
41 x 31 cm / 16⅛ x 12¼ in.
Published by H. Piazza et Cie, Paris

The title-page of *Le Pater* demonstrates the harmonious union of Mucha's inherent Symbolist tendency with Masonic symbolism. While the composition is dominated by an allegorical figure rendered in '*le style Mucha*', the vertical band towards the spine of the book carries the seven ornamental motifs associated with Freemasonry as well as other mystic symbols. These motifs reappear in the subsequent pages of the book, serving as a guide to the symbolic meaning of each verse.



LE PATER

COMMENTAIRE ET COMPOSITIONS
DE
A. M. MUCHA

F. CHAMPENOIS
IMPRIMEUR-ÉDITEUR
66, Bd S.-MICHEL, PARIS

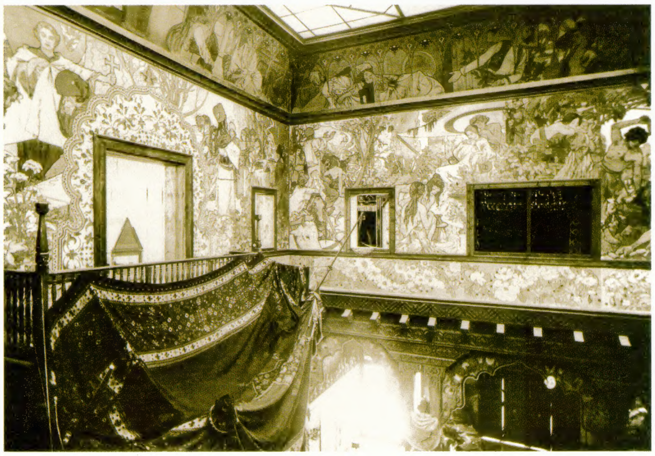
H. PIAZZA & Cie
« L'ÉDITION D'ART »
4, RUE JACOB, PARIS

concepts such as the separation of Church and State, and freedom of conscience. For Mucha, who was seeking "the power of brotherhood, the power of love and the power of enthusiasm", which would enable him to work for "the liberation and advancement of the Czech nation", Freemasonry provided the ideological framework for his philosophy as a thinking artist.

Mucha's Masonic philosophy is reflected in *Le Pater* (pp. 52, 53), the illustrated book of his personal interpretation of the Lord's Prayer – the most widely used Christian prayer. He conceived this work as a private project roughly at the same time as his initiation into Freemasonry, envisaging it to be a "means to spread light that would reach even into the remotest corners". Unlike the usual treatment of the subject, as exemplified by the contemporary illustration by James Tissot (1836–1902) for *The Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, published in 1896–97, Mucha's *Le Pater* was not the depiction of an episode in the New Testament but the pictorial expression of his own philosophical idea inspired by the words of the prayer. Mucha divided the prayer into seven verses to analyse the idea behind the words and give a new insight into each line, each of which was represented in a set of three pages treated in different styles. The first, a heading page with one verse of the prayer presented in Latin and in French, was richly decorated with mystic symbols combined with floral and geometric patterns. The second, a textual page with Mucha's interpretation of the verse, was decorated in the style of an illuminated manuscript. The third, a full-page monochromatic drawing (p. 52), showed a visual interpretation of Mucha's text on the previous page.

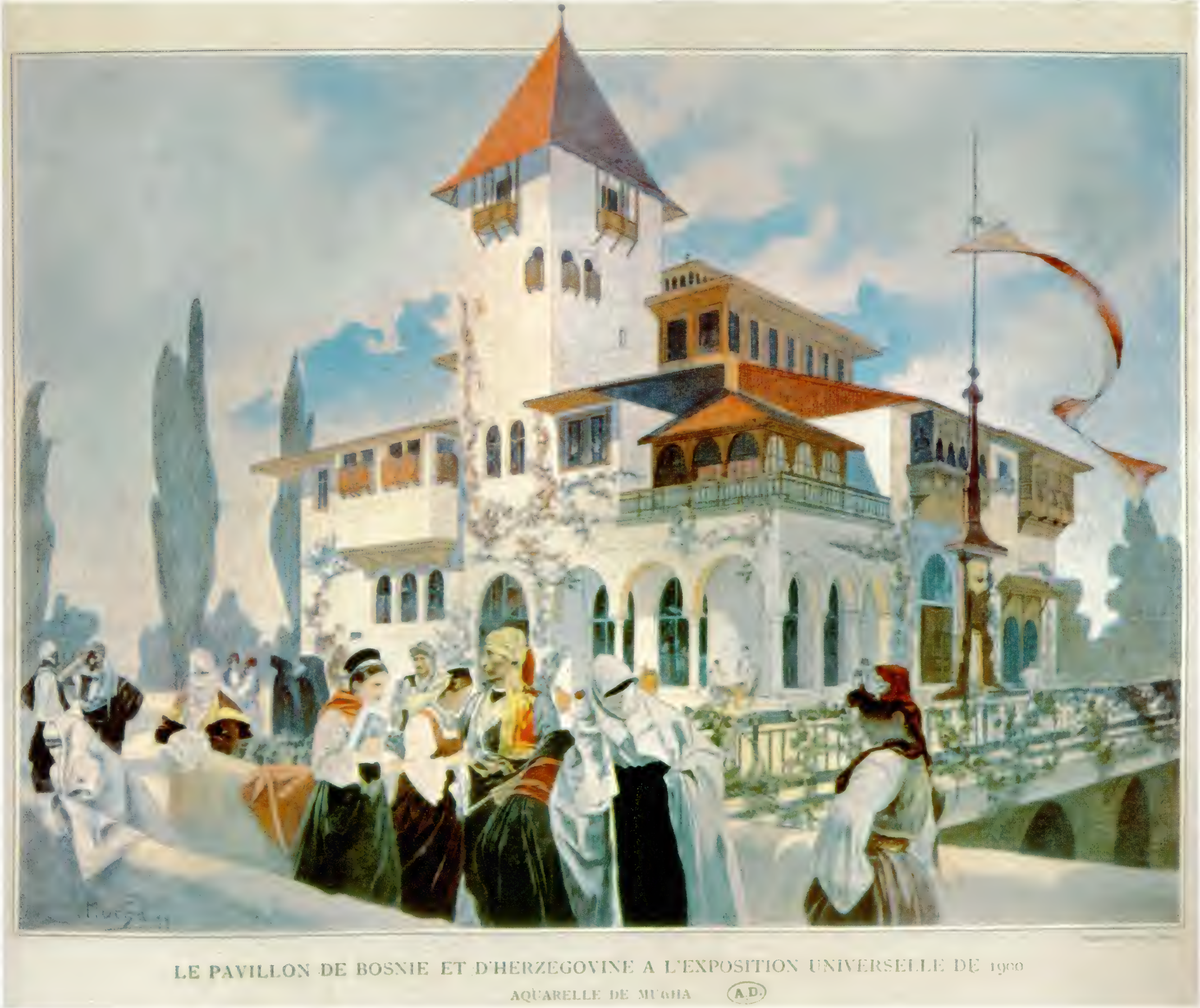
As a whole, Mucha's *Le Pater* depicted the gradual progress of mankind in seven stages from the darkness of ignorance, through a long journey pursuing higher states of spirituality, guided by the Light, towards the Ideal to meet the Supreme Being. It was a total work of art in book form expressing his spiritual vision with words combined with diverse visual languages. Above all, by synthesising into a coherent decorative scheme a wide range of iconographic elements from different cultures and religions, such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism, as well as Egyptian and Masonic symbols, Mucha was able to express his notion of God as the universal spiritual force beyond any dogmatic differences between religions.

Le Pater was published in Paris on December 20, 1899, by F. Champenois and H. Piazza. Mucha regarded the book as his greatest achievement and included it among his exhibits at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900. In the May 1900 issue of *Le Mois Littéraire et Pittoresque*, the critic Abel Fabre (1872–1929) wrote



Bosnia and Herzegovina Pavilion at
the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900:
interior view with Mucha's mural
Reproduction of a vintage print

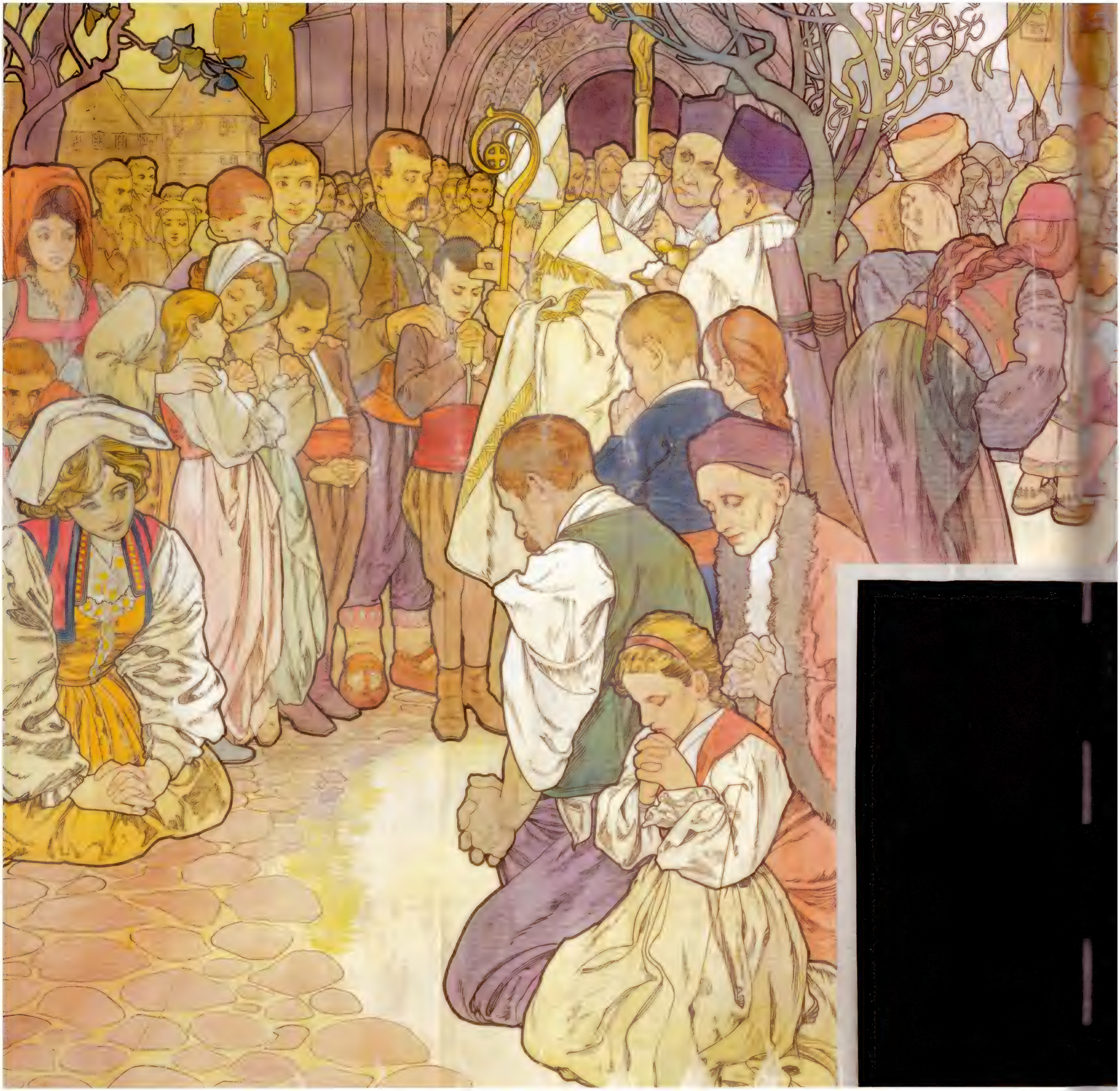
Bosnian people in ceremonial costume – from
Mucha's research trip to the Balkans, 1899
Photograph from original glass-plate negative

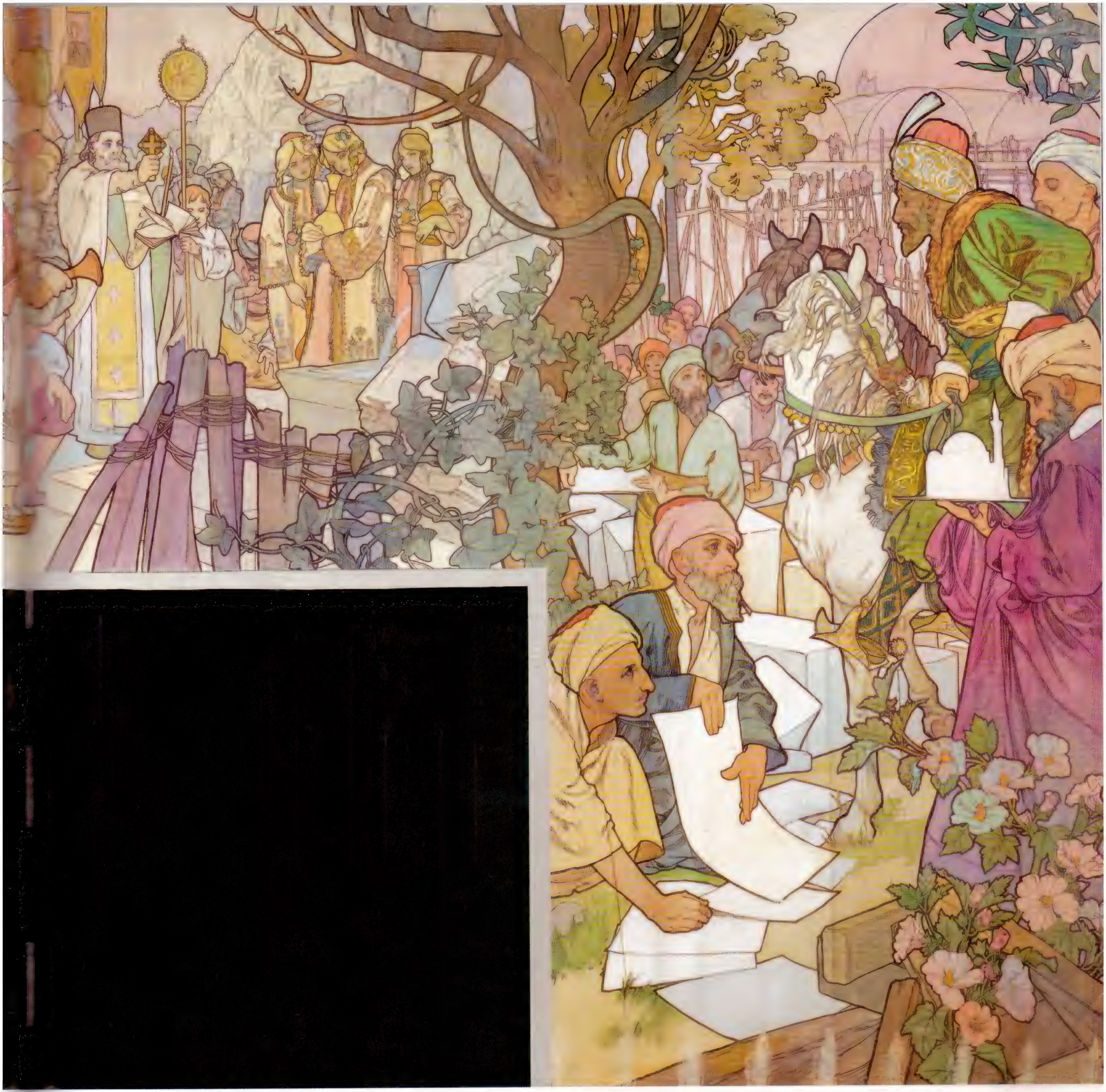

LE PAVILLON DE BOSNIE ET D'HERZEGOVINE A L'EXPOSITION UNIVERSELLE DE 1900
AQUARELLE DE MUCHA
A.D.

Bosnia and Herzegovina Pavilion, 1900
Mucha's drawing reproduced in *Le Figaro illustré* (March 1, 1900)

that Mucha's "artistic treatment of the prayer goes beyond the concepts that we are accustomed to in Christian iconography. God is no longer the old man with a white beard as embodied by our ancestors. Instead, he is a vast and powerful being whose immense shadow permeates everything."

In the spring of 1899, while *Le Pater* was being prepared, the Austro-Hungarian government approached Mucha, now seen as a leading 'Austro-Hungarian' artist, with a major commission for the forthcoming Paris Exposition – the decoration of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Pavilion, which was to be built between the Austrian Pavilion and the Hungarian Pavilion. At the time, Bosnia and Herzegovina was an Ottoman province, but since 1878 it had been a *de facto* colonial territory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Over the previous 20 years, the Austrian administration had been increasing its influence in the region, controlling the local resentment as well as tensions between its Muslim and Slavic communities. The Empire was now preparing for full-scale annexation, and so this Pavilion had special importance as a platform for demonstrating to the world its achievement of bringing peace, order and prosperity to the region.



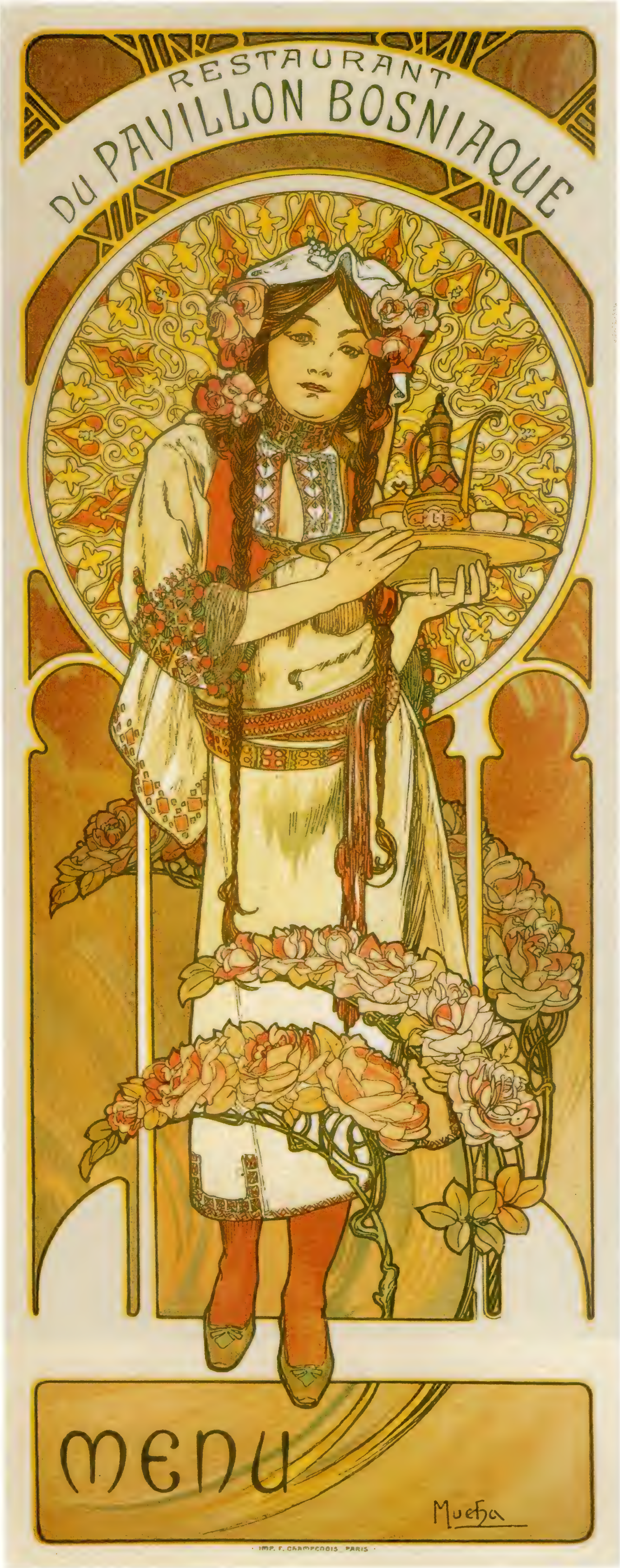


The Catholic Faith, the Orthodox Faith and Islam, 1900
Mural for the Bosnia and Herzegovina Pavilion
Tempera and watercolour on canvas,
344 x 687 cm / 135 x 270 in.
Prague, Museum of Decorative Arts

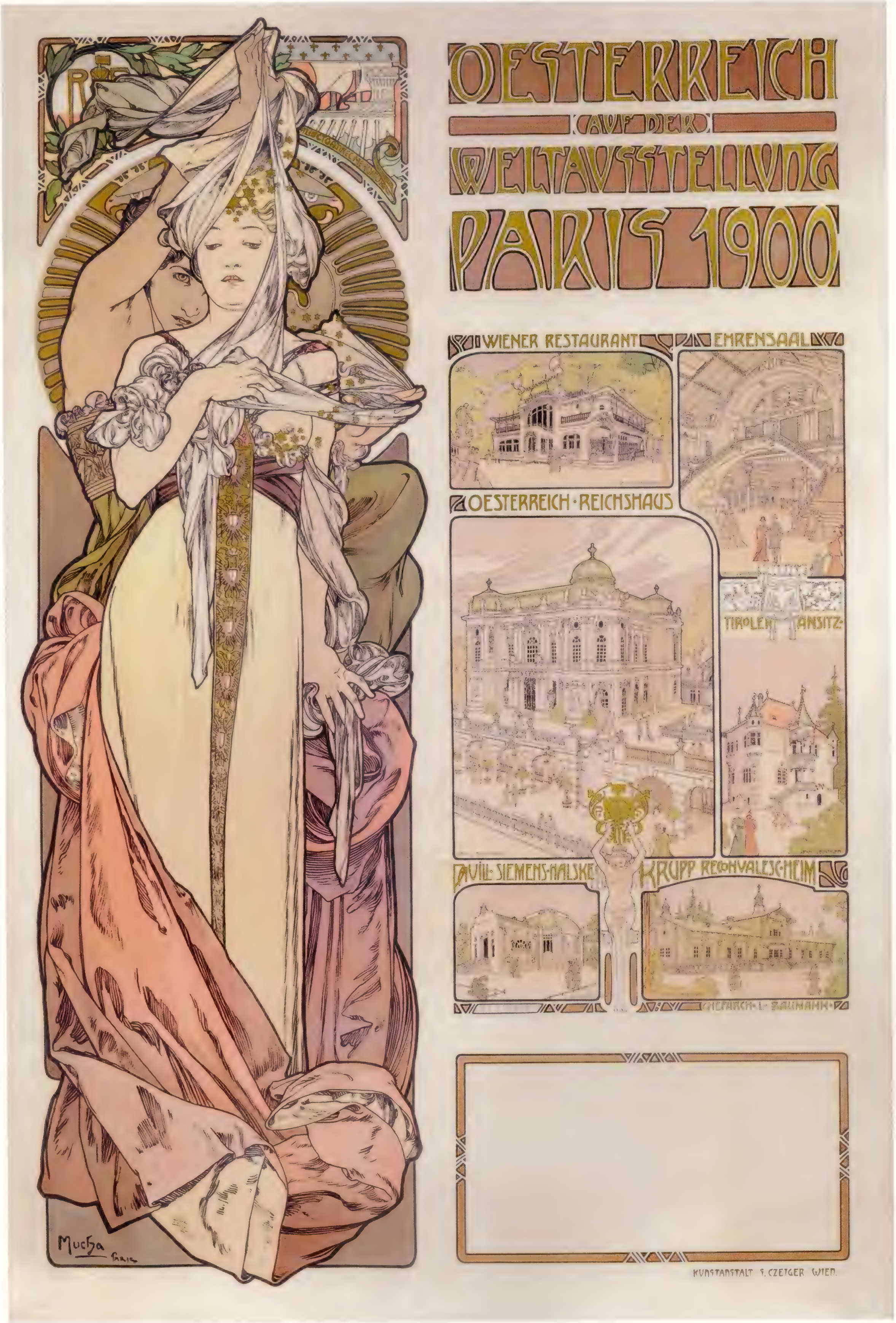
The three scenes here representing the different religious faiths are integrated harmoniously into one continuous landscape. The Catholic faith is depicted on the left with a bishop administering confirmation to the Bosnian people. In the centre, an Orthodox monk performs the rite of the Great Blessing of Water. Islam is represented by a new mosque, which is being built in the background, while in the foreground an architect is instructing the builders.

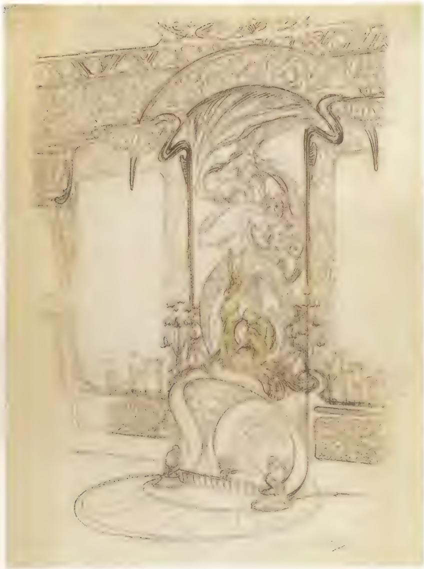
Austria at the World Exhibition: Paris 1900**,** 1900
Colour lithograph, 98.5 x 68 cm / 38¾ x 26¾ in.

In the design-work for this poster, Mucha was responsible only for the left-hand section and the lettering above the images of the six Austrian buildings presented at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900. Mucha's allegorical composition features two figures, with Austria personified as the woman at the front being unveiled by Paris behind her, thus representing the theme of the poster: "Paris presents Austria to the world". The Empire's emblem, a double-headed eagle, is integrated into the circular motif in the background.



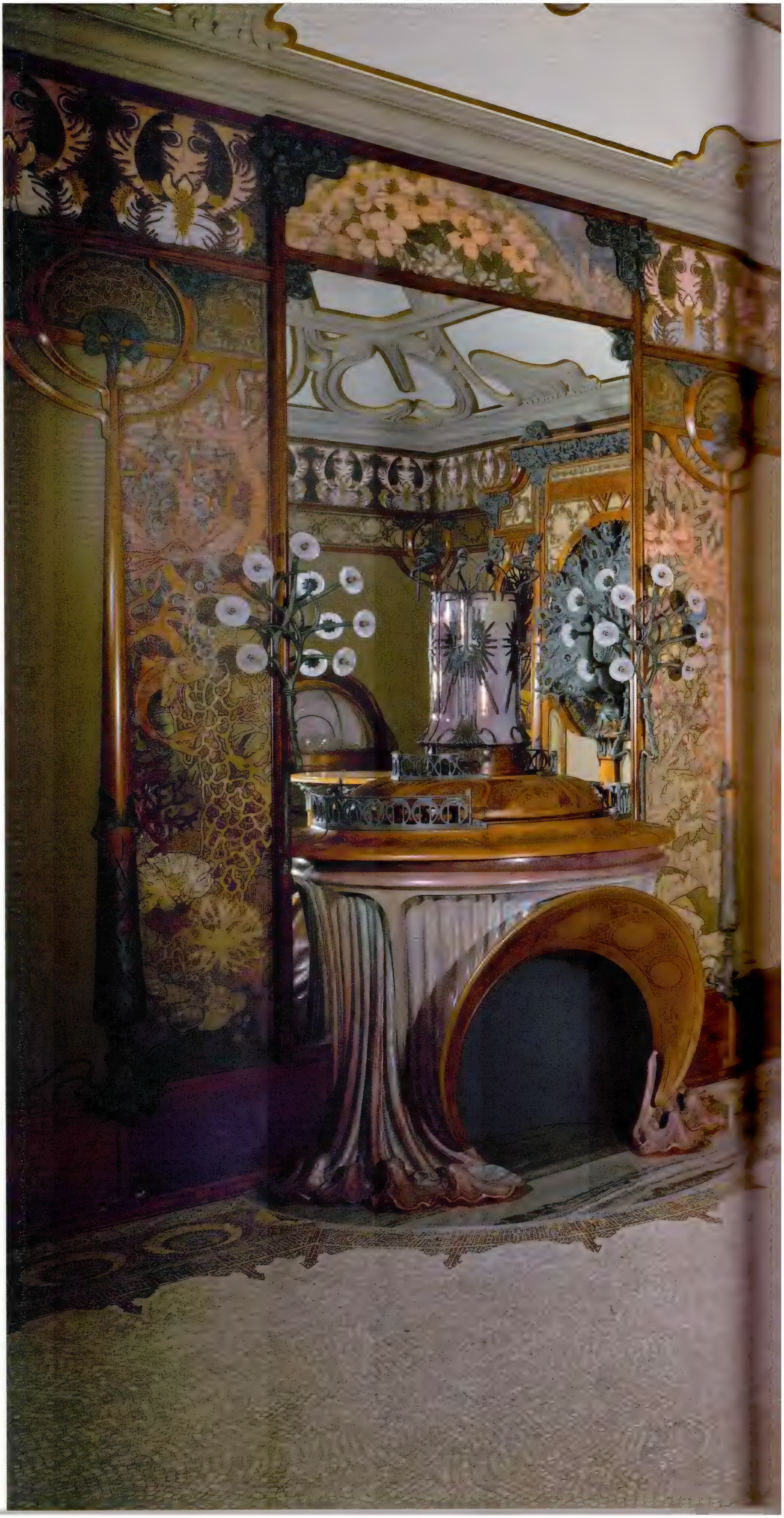
Restaurant du Pavillon Bosniaque: Menu**,** 1900
Colour lithograph, 33 x 13 cm / 13 x 5⅛ in.


OESTERREICH
AUF DER
WELTAUSSTELLUNG
PARIS 1900
WIENER RESTAURANT
EHRENSAAL
OESTERREICH · REICHSHAUS
TIROLER ANSITZ
PAVILL · SIEMENS-HALSKE
KRUPP RECONVALESC·HEIM
ARCH · L · BAUMANN ·
Mucha Paris
KUNSTANSTALT F. CZETGER WIEN.

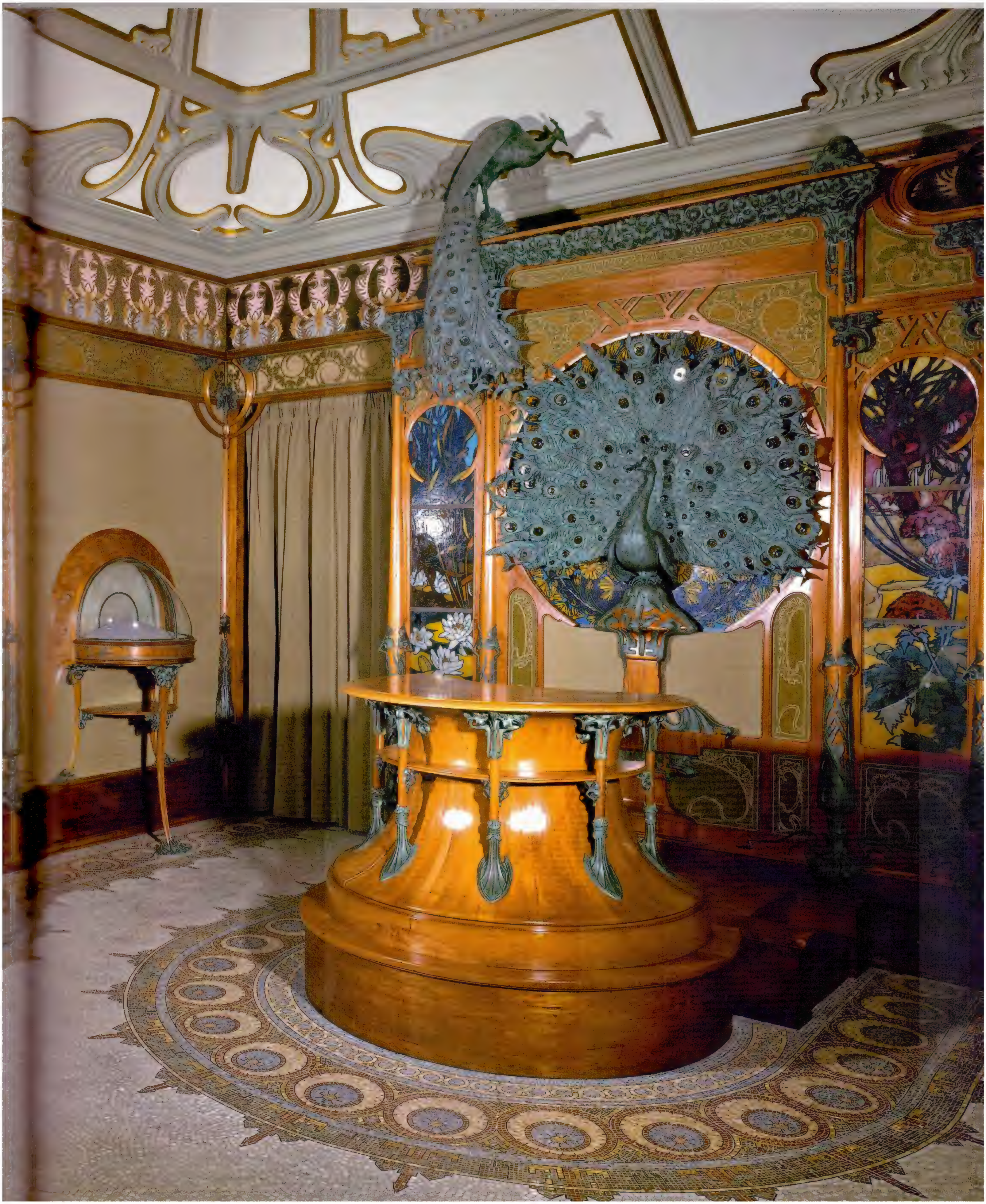


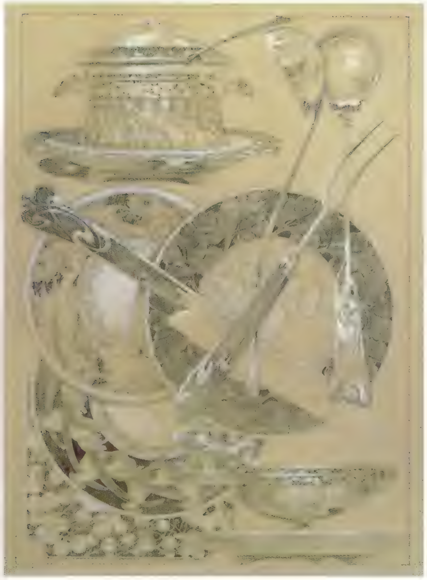
Boutique Fouquet: design for the interior – fireplace, mirror and ceiling (detail), 1900
Pencil and watercolour on paper,
65 x 48.5 cm / 25⅝ x 19⅛ in.

In his designs for the interior of the Boutique Fouquet Mucha conceived the space as a magical 'backdrop' which would enhance the beauty and spirit of the new jewellery. This drawing shows a shell-shaped fireplace, built-in floral light fittings, a group of two allegorical figures with a clock as well as a circular mirror surrounded by a decorative painting – all the elements are united by curving lines and themes from nature to form a harmonious whole.



Boutique Fouquet: reconstruction of the interior designed by Mucha, at the Musée Carnavalet, Paris





Documents décoratifs: drawing for Plate 59, *c.* 1901–02
Pencil, ink and white highlights on paper, 48 x 31 cm / 18⅞ x 12¼ in.

Documents décoratifs showed not only examples of Mucha's 'ready-to-use' designs for a wide range of objects and daily utensils but also the process of stylisation used to transform a drawing from nature into a decorative pattern or the form of an object. For this publication Mucha prepared numerous drawings in varied styles and media that demonstrate his versatile draughtsmanship.

The commission presented Mucha with a dilemma in that it would mean working for a project generated by the Empire's subjugation of the Slavic people. However, it was also a great opportunity for Mucha to work *for* his fellow Slavs: in view of their political predicament, he originally wanted to portray the suffering of the people who had been humiliated by foreign occupations for many years, but understandably this theme was not well received by the Austrian authorities, and Mucha was forced to change his concept to a more positive, celebratory one. Eventually, he resolved the problem by presenting an idealised vision of the civilisation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose indigenous culture had been enriched by foreign influences, developing into a multi-religious nation, with Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity and Islam co-existing in harmony, together contributing to the spiritual prosperity of the region. Sadly, however, subsequent history proved this to be an unattainable dream in Mucha's lifetime.

The project was realised as a mural cycle decorating the upper walls of the central exhibition hall of the Pavilion (p. 54 bottom left), which also featured the *Panorama of Sarajevo*, a diorama by the German landscape painter Adolf Kaufmann (1848–1916), together with a display of craftwork and a collection of various artefacts. Mucha placed the allegorical painting, *Bosnia Offers Her Products to the Exposition Universelle*, above the diorama, and linked together three other walls with the frieze of the 'Bosnian cycle', depicting pivotal scenes from the region's cultural development in a continuous landscape from the prehistoric era to its contemporary multi-religious society (pp. 56–57). In executing the murals, Mucha applied his distinctive decorative style as familiar from his posters and decorative panels, with strong, eloquent outlines, flatly applying lighter shades of colours with tempera and watercolour, and the motifs of trees, plants and flowers giving rhythms between the scenes.

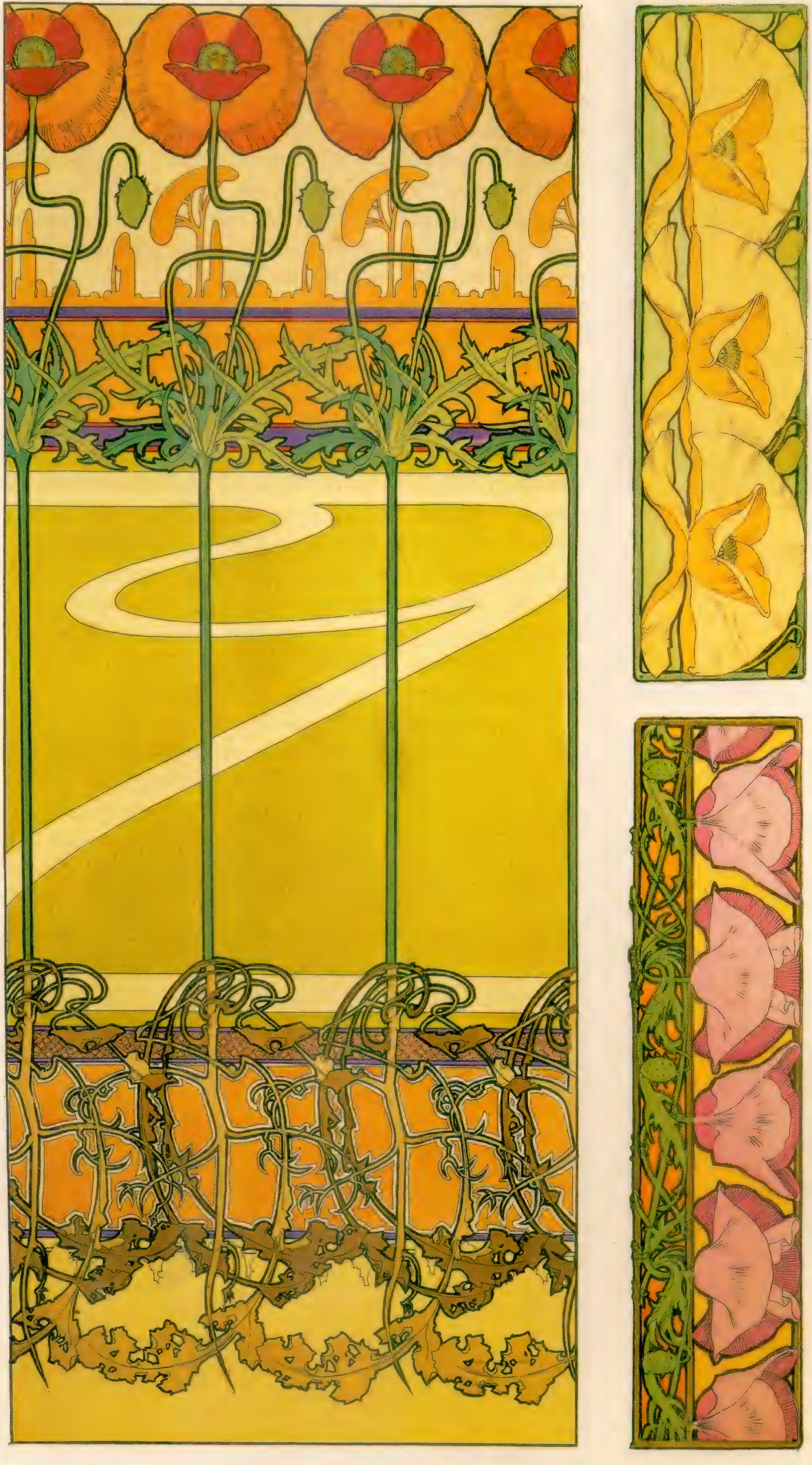
Before starting work on the project, Mucha travelled widely through the Balkans to gather impressions and to sketch, which was reflected in his accurate depictions of folk motifs as well as archaeological and architectural details. He was particularly inspired by tragic stories from Bosnian legends and made a number of expressive charcoal and pastel drawings, sketched specifically for the Bosnian cycle. However, the completed murals show these themes only in the arched bands at the top coloured in sombre shades of blue, alluding to the spiritual world.

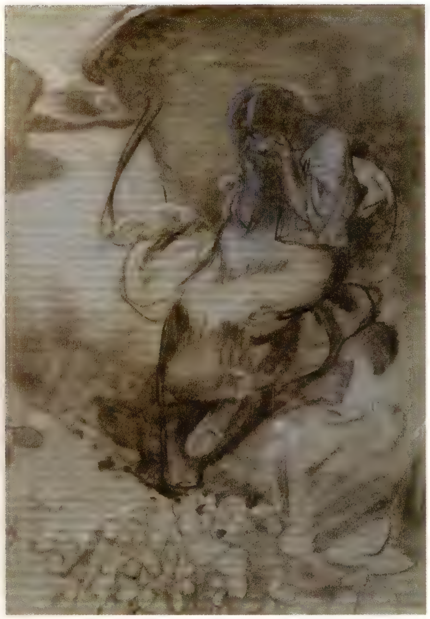
From this experience, Mucha conceived the idea for a new project that was to become his main focus for the rest of his artistic career. He wrote: "As I drew the epic moments in the lives of the Bosnians, I felt in my heart the joys and sorrows of my own nation and of all the other Slavic peoples. Before I had completed these Southern Slav murals, I had made up my mind about my future big work which was to become *The Slav Epic*, and I saw it as a great and glorious light shining into the souls of all people with its clear ideals and burning warnings."

Mucha's contribution to the Paris Exposition was many-sided. Officially, he was an Austro-Hungarian artist, but he was also a 'Parisian' artist of international fame. In addition to the project for the Bosnia and Herzegovina Pavilion, the assignments from the Austro-Hungarian government included designs for the poster for the Austrian participation in the Exposition (p. 59) and the cover of its own official guide as well as the menu for the restaurant in the Bosnian Pavilion (p. 58). As an exhibiting artist, Mucha's works were shown in the Austrian Pavilion and in the Grand Palais (Austrian section), including *Le Pater* (pp. 52, 53) and his latest graphic works, as well as a sculpture entitled *La Nature* (p. 50).

Documents décoratifs: Plate 29, 1902
Colour lithograph, 46 x 33 cm / 18⅛ x 13 in.
Published by the Librairie Centrale des Beaux-Arts, Paris

PL.29





***Girl Weeping**, c.* 1899–1900
Black chalk and pastel on paper,
47.5 x 32.3 cm / 18¾ x 12¾ in.

For the City of Paris, he designed the menu for the official banquet to celebrate the Exposition. Furthermore, he also worked on private commissions from the Parisian jeweller Georges Fouquet (1862–1957) and the renowned French perfumery Houbigant. Mucha contributed designs for jewellery (see p. 51) and display cases for Fouquet's stand, and undertook the decoration of the Houbigant stand, which featured ornamental statuettes and four decorative panels personifying the scents of rose, orange blossom, violet and buttercup.

This last world's fair of the 19th century was intended to celebrate the achievements of mankind over the past 100 years and to welcome in a modern new century. The Exposition of 1900 had a record number of participants – from 58 countries and over 76,000 business exhibitors, of which nearly half were from France and its colonies, each represented by an individual pavilion. On the other hand, the Czech presence at the Exposition was humble; only a small number of businesses and organisations from Prague could afford to participate in the event and all the Czech work was incorporated into the Austrian presentation, along with the other nations under the Empire's administration. It was therefore the 'Parisian' Mucha who became the most conspicuous representative of the 'Czech work'. For his contribution to the Exposition Mucha was granted honours by both the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Knight of the Order of Franz Joseph I) as well as the French Government (Legion of Honour).

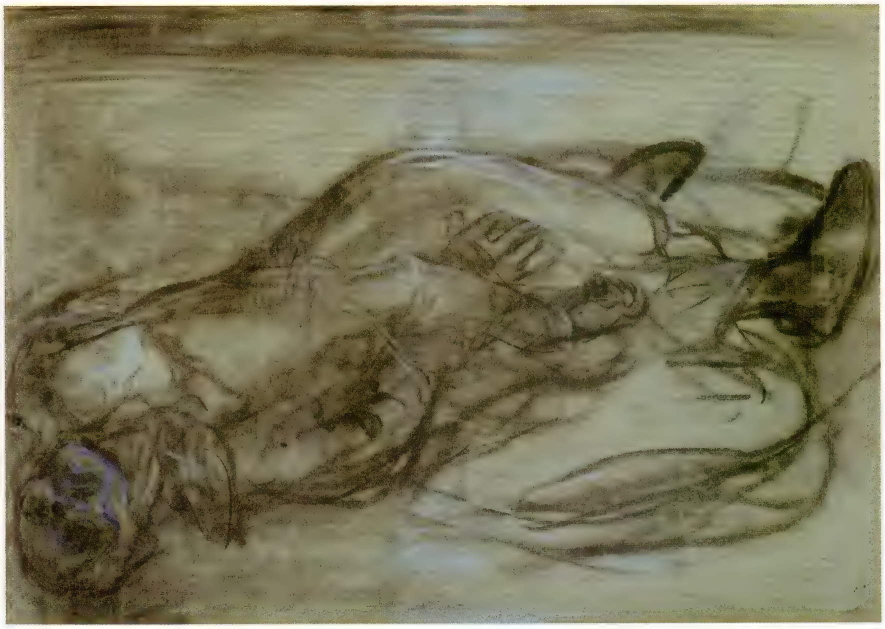
After the Paris Exposition of 1900, Mucha continued to be busy with commissions for decorative works, despite his wish to start working on his plan for a Slav epic. Nevertheless, the two projects that developed at this time summarise Mucha's important contribution to the Art Nouveau style and philosophy: the design of a new Boutique Fouquet and the publication of *Documents décoratifs*.

Since around 1898 Mucha had been collaborating with Fouquet, who had been seeking inspiration for a new jewellery design. Mucha's jewellery, which looked as if it had sprung straight from his well-known posters, became a great success, and led to Fouquet's commission to design his new shop. Mucha conceived the project as a total work of art, designing not only the interior and furnishings but also the façade, uniting all the ornamental elements under a coherent decorative scheme (pp. 60–61). The new Boutique Fouquet opened in 1901 in the rue Royale, the heart of Paris. It received great critical acclaim and was regarded as "a shop of a new type" that was raised to the level of art, in which Fouquet's jewellery was displayed in total harmony with the environment.

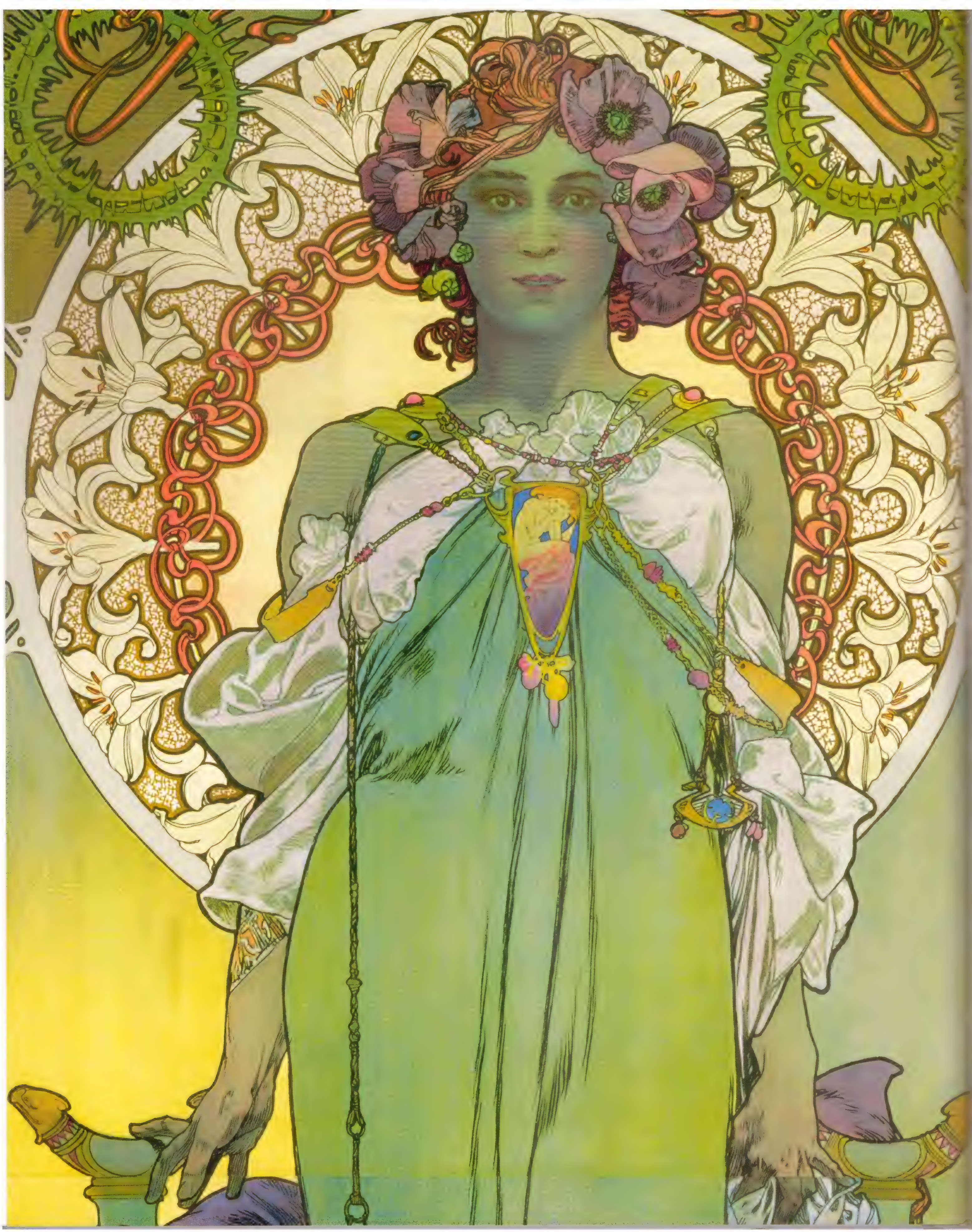
Mucha's *Documents décoratifs* (pp. 62, 63) was published in Paris in 1902 by the Librairie Centrale des Beaux-Arts, as a folio of 72 plates presenting his decorative work. Mucha conceived this as a handbook for artisans and manufacturers, showing the analytical study of forms from nature and their practical use. These design samples, ranging from cutlery, tableware and jewellery to furniture, light fittings and wallpaper, show his boundless imagination to create new forms from motifs from nature and from the human body. The *Documents décoratifs* was considered an invaluable textbook for arts and crafts students and was used by art schools in France and elsewhere in Europe as well as in Russia. Thus the publication fulfilled its author's ideal – the creation of art for the benefit of society. In the Preface the art critic Gabriel Mourey (1865–1943) wrote: "In contrast to so many of his colleagues who practise their art without a philosophical basis, he [Mucha] possesses set notions and precise ideas on the future, the goal and the mission of decorative art. If these solid principles do not suffice to make an artist, they are powerful aids to the development of the talents and the instinct without which that privileged being cannot exist."

During this same period in which Mucha received the highest acclaim for his decorative works, he was also producing a large number of pastel and charcoal drawings (e.g. pp. 64, 65), which remained unseen in his lifetime. In sharp contrast to his familiar style – calculated and solidly outlined – these private drawings were executed spontaneously with quick, expressive strokes, often in dark, limited colours. With titles such as *Vision*, *Phantoms*, *Abyss* or *Dead Couple – Abandoned* (below), Mucha depicted his spiritual visions as inspired by Masonic philosophy as well as his emotional response to the darker side of humanity. This group of works, which received no scholarly attention until recent decades, seems to reflect Mucha's internal struggle, standing at the crossroads of his career, as well as his awareness of the dualistic nature of humanity, which was to develop into a belief along these lines: "Beauty is accompanied by ugliness as light by shadow; harmony in life can be preserved only when faith in human goodness is accompanied by awareness of ever-present evil."

"Art is the expression
of innermost feelings …
a spiritual need."
— ALPHONSE MUCHA



Dead Couple – Abandoned, *c.* 1900
Charcoal and pastel on paper,
40.3 x 57.7 cm / 15⅞ x 22¾ in.

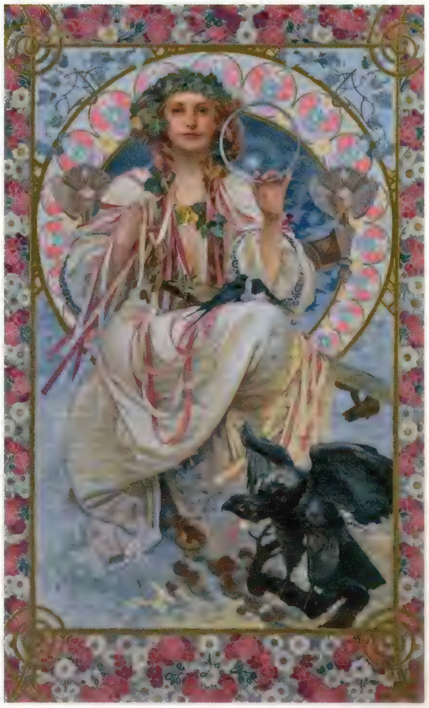


The American Interlude

On March 6, 1904, Mucha disembarked from the *La Lorraine* at the Port of New York, one of the busiest in the world. Four years after he had resolved to begin work on the project that would eventually appear as *The Slav Epic*, Mucha finally managed to take the first step towards his ambition – seeking opportunities to accumulate the necessary capital for the work. As he described in the letter quoted at the beginning of the first chapter, it took a while for him to break with the Parisian art world and try his luck in the land of opportunity. One of his most eager supporters in this move was Baroness Adèle von Rothschild (1843–1922), whose salon in Paris Mucha had frequented. Convincing him that there was a great demand for portrait painting in American high society, the Baroness introduced him to her network of friends and even arranged his first commission in New York, to paint a portrait of her relative, Helen Wissman (1866–?).

In stark contrast to his arrival in Paris 16 years before, Mucha was welcomed in America as a celebrity. His posters were already familiar to the American public, thanks to Sarah Bernhardt who had been using Mucha's designs for the publicity for her American tours since 1896. He was also a leading exponent of the dominant artistic style at the time, Art Nouveau, which had been exhibited in the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900. Mucha's arrival in New York made the headlines in many of the newspapers and he was constantly chased by journalists and publishers during his stay. In addition, Baroness Rothschild's introduction proved highly effective: in his rented studio near Central Park, while Mucha was busy working on the portrait of Mrs Wissman he was also entertaining society ladies from New York, Chicago and Philadelphia, and juggling invitations to fashionable soirées and banquets as well as requests for talks.

In the midst of overwhelming public attention, Mucha was astounded by the large posters showing his own life-size portrait, which were displayed on billboards all over New York (p. 68). The posters were advertising Mucha's allegorical drawing, *Friendship*, produced for *The New York Daily News* and which appeared on the front page of the paper's Art Supplement for Sunday April 3, 1904 (see p. 69). In devoting this issue to Mucha, the paper hailed him as "the Greatest Decorative Artist in the World", whilst on the same day *The New York Herald* also featured a tribute to him under the heading, "Mucha, Prince of Poster Artists". Mucha was pleased by America's enthusiastic welcome but also felt ambivalent: after all, his fame here as well was confined largely to his posters. Furthermore,



Portrait of Josephine Crane Bradley as Slavia, 1908
Oil and tempera on canvas,
154 x 92.5 cm / 60⅝ x 36⅜ in.
Prague, National Gallery

[Mrs] Leslie Carter (detail), 1908
Poster for *Kassa*
Colour lithograph,
209.5 x 78.2 cm / 82½ x 30¾ in.

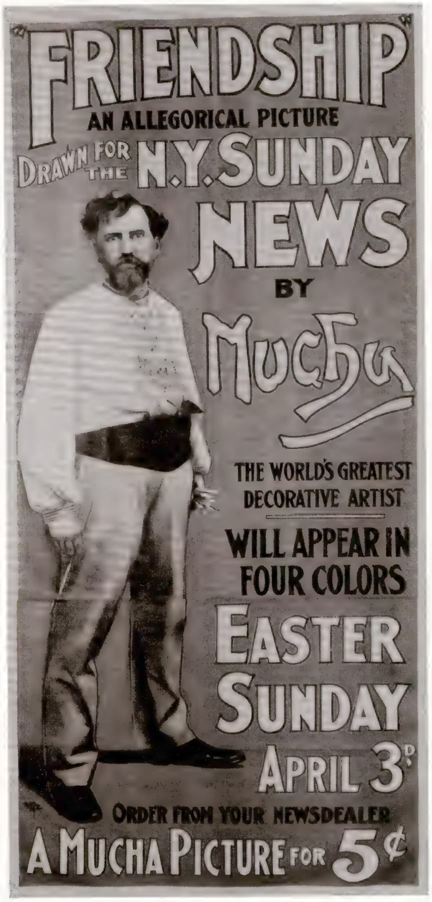
The New York Daily News: Sunday Art Supplement devoted to Mucha, April 3, 1904

he was beginning to realise that it would not be as easy as he had expected to reach his financial goal just by working as a society portrait painter.

Nevertheless, and despite his short stay of less than three months, the trip was worthwhile for Mucha in terms of gaining a foothold in the New World, especially with regard to the rapidly growing Czech and Slavic communities. During this period, fighting in the Russo-Japanese War, which had broken out in February, was becoming more intense. To demonstrate his Pan-Slavic sentiment, Mucha attended a banquet in support of Russia, held at the famous Delmonico's restaurant in New York, and there met Charles Richard Crane (1858–1939), a wealthy businessman from Chicago, a philanthropist and Slavophile, who was later to play the pivotal role in the development of Mucha's *Slav Epic* project. On this same occasion Mucha also took the opportunity to found the American Slav Association. This was to develop into the Slavic American Cultural Association Inc., established in New York, which represented 12 ethnic groups and promoted "the contributions of Slavs to American life … as a cultural and political force".

On his return to Europe at the end of May 1904, Mucha was preoccupied by plans for his work in America, while endeavouring at the same time to complete the last commissions from various Parisian publishers, including 40 drawings for *Figures décoratives*, to be published in 1905 as a sequel to his hugely popular *Documents décoratifs* (1902). Concurrently, he also began to work on *Madonna of the Lilies* (p. 70), a painting intended to form his decorative scheme for a church in Jerusalem, which had been commissioned in 1902 but was cancelled later in 1905. Even so, his concept for a stained-glass window for the same project in Jerusalem (p. 71) would go on to be developed in America as a monumental painting, *Harmony* (1908). By the end of 1904, Mucha had managed to terminate his contracts with Champenois and other Parisian publishers, and he set off for New York again in early January 1905.

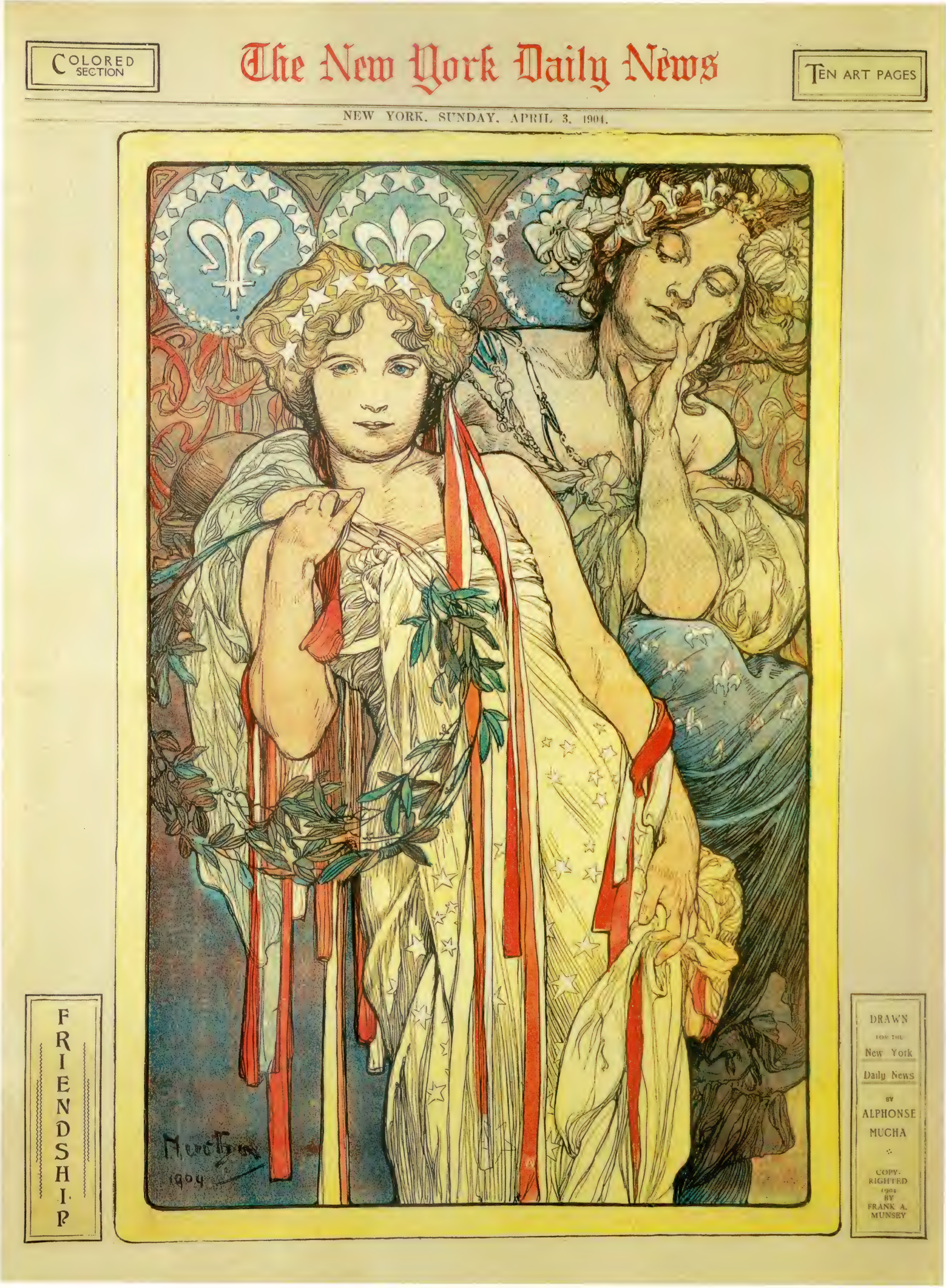
Billboard in New York advertising Mucha's lithograph, *Friendship* (1904)


FRIENDSHIP
AN ALLEGORICAL PICTURE
DRAWN FOR THE N.Y. SUNDAY NEWS
BY
Mucha
THE WORLD'S GREATEST DECORATIVE ARTIST
WILL APPEAR IN FOUR COLORS
EASTER SUNDAY
APRIL 3D
ORDER FROM YOUR NEWSDEALER
A MUCHA PICTURE FOR 5¢

Between the winter of early 1905 and 1910, Mucha visited America four times. On three of these occasions his stay lasted five to six months, but in the autumn of 1906, when he went to America with his newly-wed wife, Marie (Maruška) *née* Chytilová (1882/83–1959), he stayed until the summer of 1909; their first child, Jaroslava (1909–1986), was born in New York that year.

Mucha's regular source of income in America came from teaching. In 1905 he began to teach illustration and design at the New York School of Applied Design for Women, while also giving private lessons in his 'Atelier Mucha'. In 1906 he was invited to lecture at the Philadelphia School of Art for five weeks, and later the same year he became a visiting professor at the Art Institute of Chicago, where his students included popular illustrators such as J. C. Leyendecker (1874–1951) and Edward Arthur Wilson (1886–1970). Mucha was a popular teacher, with a clear vision concerning art and the artist and well-devised theories that had evolved from his experience as a top graphic designer in Paris. His surviving lecture notes, which were compiled and published posthumously in 1975 as *Alphonse Mucha: Lectures on Art*, give a glimpse of his artistic philosophy: the goal of art is the expression of "beauty", by which Mucha meant "moral harmonies"; the role of the artist is to arouse the interest of the viewer in the artist's message and "to communicate with the souls of man". The "exterior form is a language" for this communication and so the artist should endeavour to create as effective a visual language as possible.

While he was working in America, Mucha generally declined commissions that were in essence commercial. However, he occasionally worked on magazine covers and advertising posters, when pressed by financial necessity. One of the



COLORED SECTION

The New York Daily News

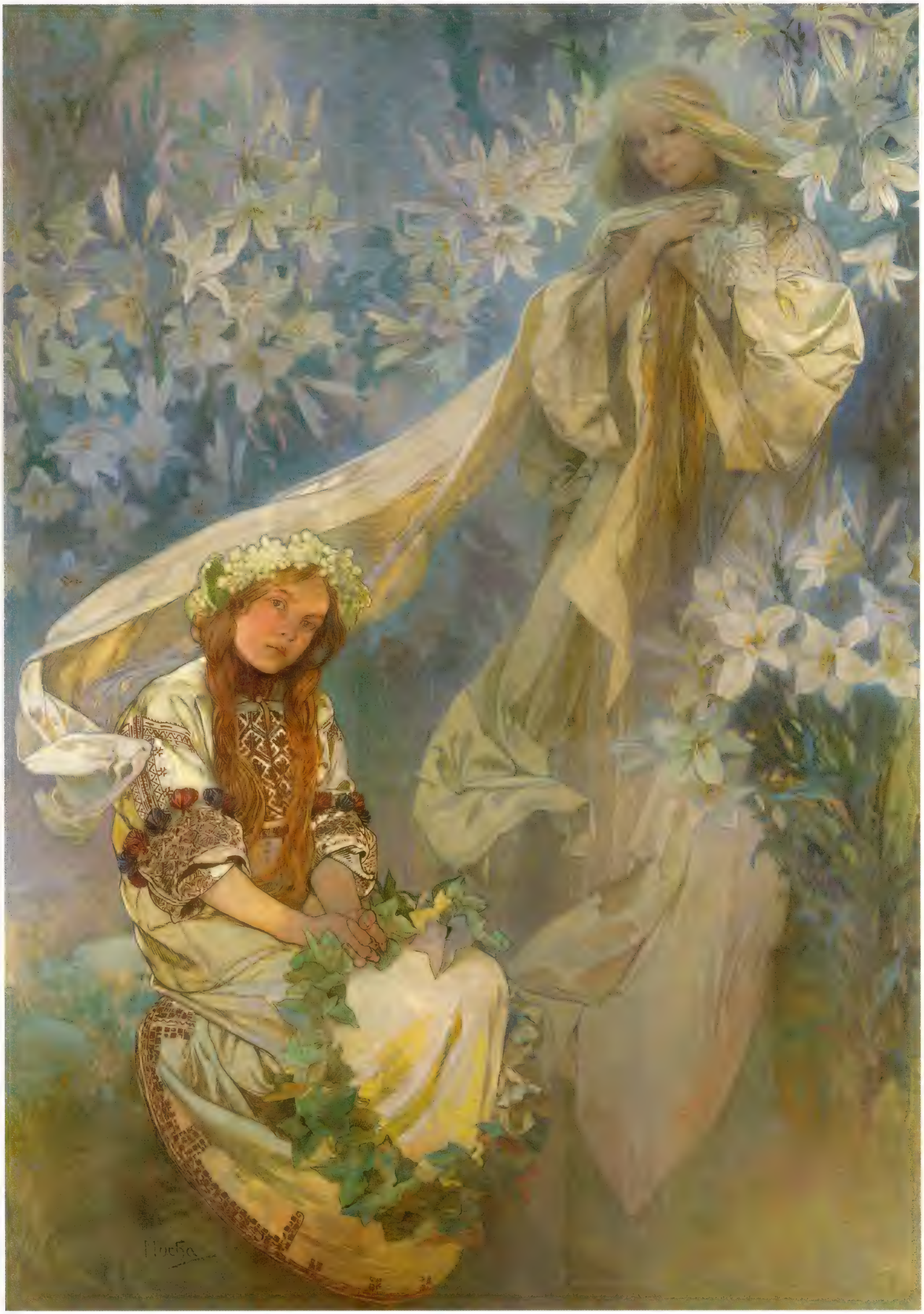
TEN ART PAGES

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, APRIL 3, 1904.

FRIENDSHIP

DRAWN
FOR THE
New York
Daily News
BY
ALPHONSE
MUCHA

COPY-
RIGHTED
1904
BY
FRANK A.
MUNSEY


Mucha

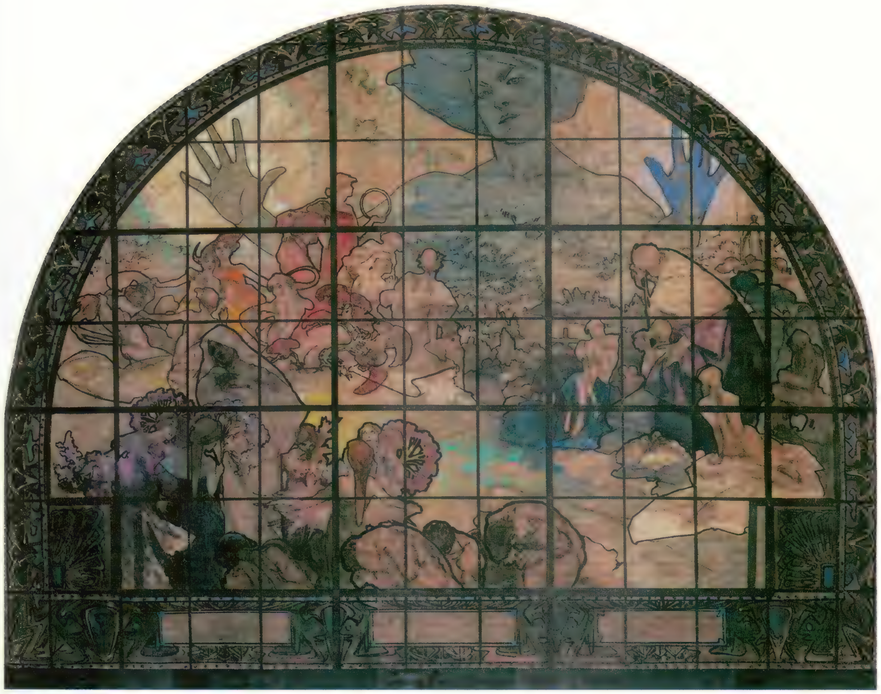
most conspicuously commercial works was in 1906 for 'Savon Mucha', a soap packaging commission from Armour & Co., a Chicago-based manufacturer. Mucha was asked to design the soap boxes and the store display (p. 72), which he produced in the style of his Parisian decorative panels. The soap was named after Mucha to boost publicity and sales, making him the first 'celebrity artist' to become the brand name of a household product.

The most ambitious project Mucha undertook in America was the decoration of the German Theatre in New York. Financed by the German community, it opened in October 1908 at the corner of Madison Avenue and 59th Street, and Mucha was asked by the theatre's director, Maurice Baumfeld (1868–1913), to decorate the whole of the interior. In Mucha's decorative scheme, which was executed in elaborate Art Nouveau style, the highlight was the three allegorical paintings decorating the proscenium: *Tragedy* (p. 73 left) and *Comedy* (p. 73 right) on either side of the stage, and *Truth (Quest for Beauty)* (1908) above it. The project also included graphic works as well as stage and costume designs for several plays. After the Boutique Fouquet in Paris, the German Theatre was Mucha's most comprehensive work of interior decoration, and his murals, in particular, were highly praised, as, for example, the reporter for *International Studio* wrote: "One of Mucha's finest achievements, in which he reached the very maturity of his powers of expression." However, to Mucha's disappointment, the theatre was closed down after a single unsuccessful season – the building was converted into a cinema in late 1909 and eventually demolished in 1929.

Mucha's further involvement in theatre included collaborations with Mrs Leslie Carter (1862–1937), known as 'the American Sarah Bernhardt', and Maude Adams (1872–1953), a top star on Broadway. Mucha designed a poster (pp. 66, 75), stage sets and costumes for Mrs Leslie Carter's new play, *Kassa*, which was premièred in New York in January 1909 but ended in bankruptcy – Mucha never succeeded in recovering his fees for this project. Disaster here was followed, however, by success in the same year, with Maude Adams's one-night performance

Madonna of the Lilies, 1905
Tempera on canvas, 247 x 182 cm / 97 x 71½ in.

Mucha called his subject here "*Virgo purissima*", and in doing so depicted the Madonna as a spiritual being surrounded by white lilies, a symbol of purity, and a figure whose mystical power radiates from her light. At her feet is a young Slavic girl in prayer, holding a wreath of ivy leaves. The girl is unaware of the heavenly presence but the Madonna's long veil gently touches her with a blessing.



Harmony, *c.* 1904–05
Design for a stained-glass window for a church in Jerusalem (unrealised)
Pencil, ink, watercolour and chalk on paper, 90 x 130 cm / 35 x 51 in.

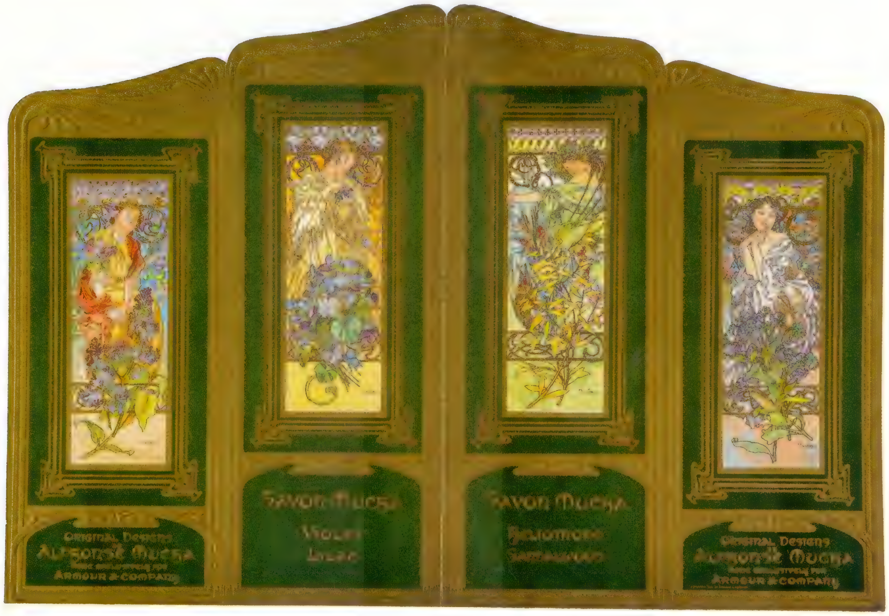
In this semicircular format, Mucha's design features the enormous half-figure of 'Harmony' appearing over the horizon, symbolising the force which governs the harmonious working of nature and human life. A similar idea and composition were explored in earlier works, such as *Le Pater* (pp. 52, 53).

of Schiller's *Maid of Orleans*, which was staged at the Harvard Stadium on June 21, 1909, with Adams in the starring role as Joan of Arc. For this production, Mucha produced costume and set designs as well as an oil portrait of Adams in costume, which was displayed before the performance as if it were the poster. For both the Carter poster and the Adams portrait, Mucha used the same design formula he had used for the Sarah Bernhardt posters.

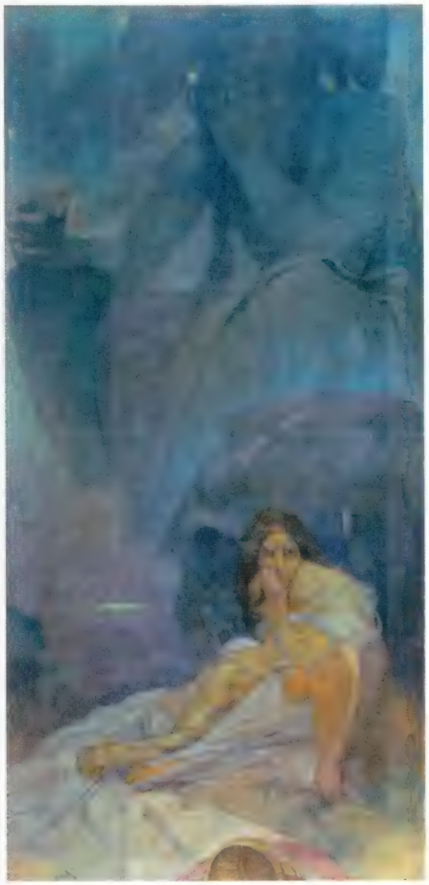
> *"The marvellous poem of the human body, or those of animals, and the music of the lines and colours which emanate from flowers, leaves and fruits, make themselves incontrovertibly educators of our eyes and taste."*
>
> — ALPHONSE MUCHA

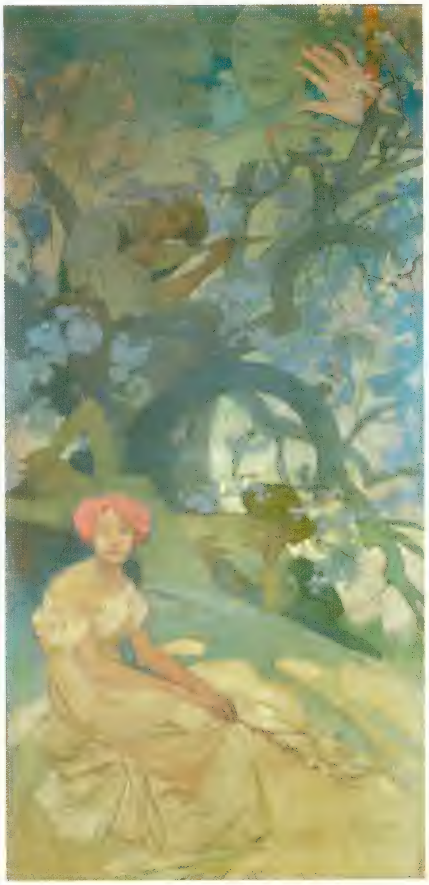
As a portrait painter, Mucha's best work in America was *Slavia* (p. 67), depicting Josephine Crane Bradley (1886–1952), the eldest daughter of Charles Crane, who had been in contact with Mucha since 1904. The painting was Crane's wedding gift for his daughter when she got married to Harold Cornelius Bradley (1878–1976) in July 1908. At Crane's request, Mucha represented Josephine as Slavia, the goddess who personified the Slavic people. Shortly after this, Mucha was also commissioned to paint the portrait of Crane's second daughter, Frances Crane Leatherbee (1887–1954), but struggled to finish this. Like many of the portrait assignments he undertook in America, the work dragged on as a dissatisfied Mucha kept repainting and retouching; he finally managed to finish the portrait in 1913. The comparison between the two portraits reveals Mucha's unease with the conventional style of society portraits. Inspired by Crane's suggestion, *Slavia* was painted in his mature decorative style with rich symbolism, capturing the charm of the American heiress in the guise of the Slavic goddess, the theme close to his heart. On the other hand, the Leatherbee portrait, in the grand manner à la Sargent, shows the sitter in a characterless pose, reflecting Mucha's lack of interest.

Since he was teaching regularly in Chicago, which was then the largest centre of Czech immigration in America, Mucha had plenty of opportunities to meet Crane, whose family business, Crane Company, was also based in the city. Crane was also the founder of a school of Russian and Slavic studies at the University of Chicago, and for this in 1902 invited the Czech philosopher and future president of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937), to attend as a visiting professor. During 1908, Crane and Mucha met often in Cape Cod, where the latter was working on *Slavia* and the German Theatre murals in his friends'



Savon Mucha, 1906
Point-of-purchase display incorporating four miniature decorative panels: Lilac, Violet, Sandalwood and Heliotrope
Colour lithograph and gold ink, printed on card, 41.9 x 61.2 cm / 16½ x 24⅛ in.





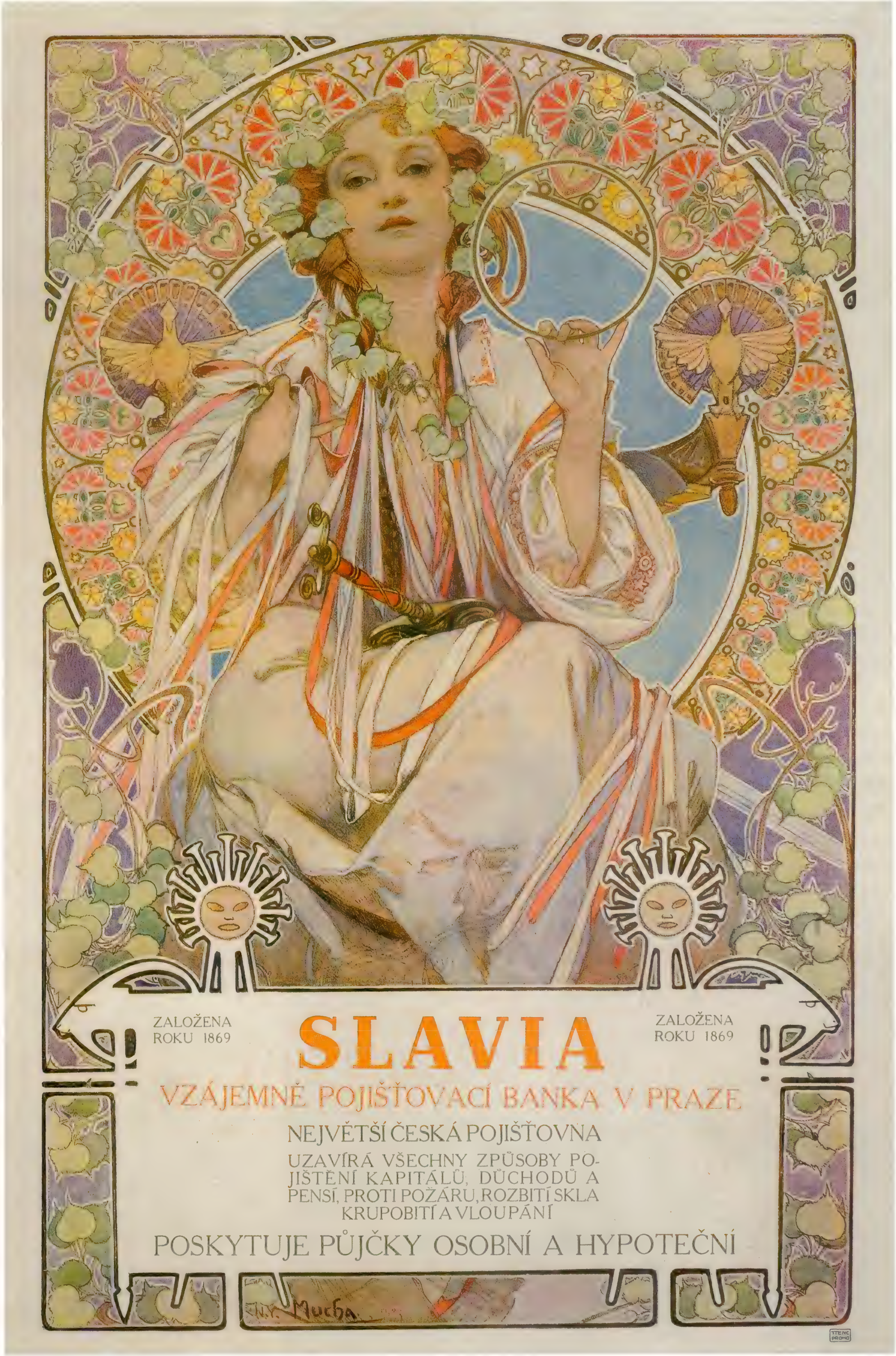
Tragedy, 1908
Study for a mural for the
German Theatre in New York
Oil and tempera on canvas,
117 x 58.5 cm / 46 x 23 in.

Comedy, 1908
Study for a mural for the
German Theatre in New York
Oil and tempera on canvas,
117 x 58.5 cm / 46 x 23 in.

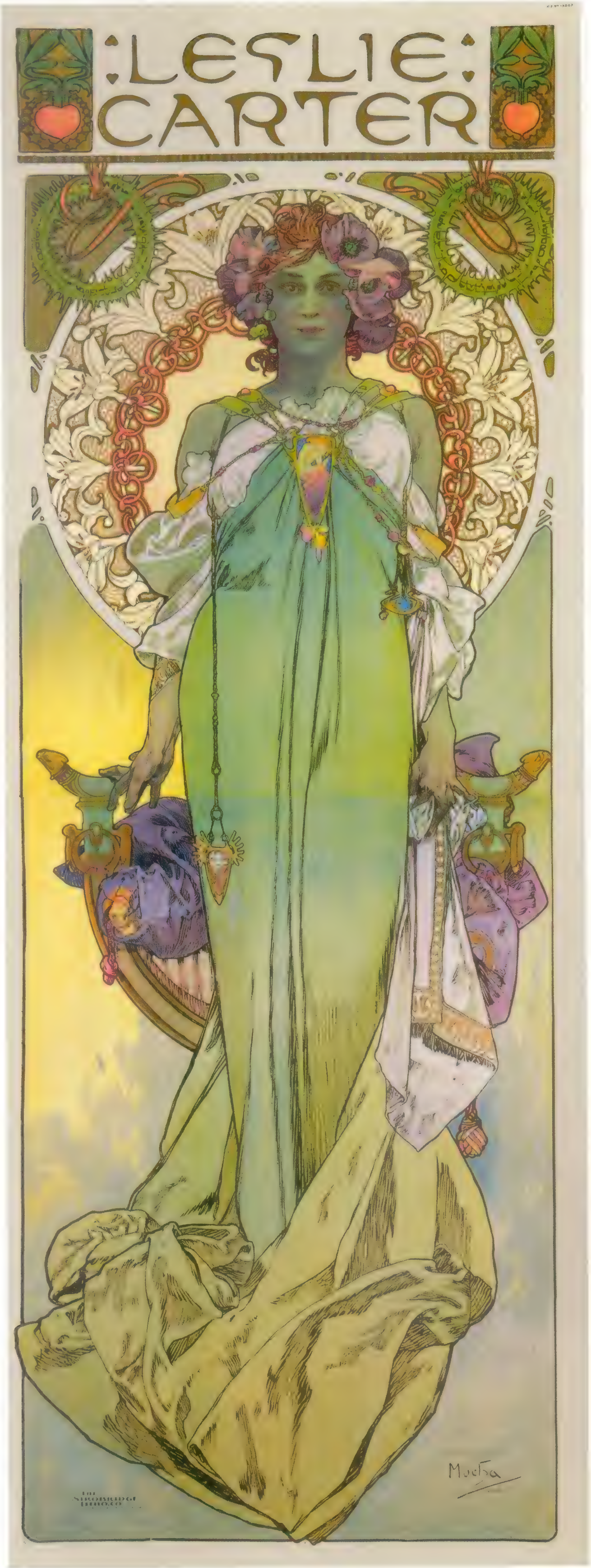
This pair of paintings show a striking contrast in mood, while their compositions form a symmetrical harmony. *Tragedy* is represented by a melancholy woman cradling a dead young man, the scene overshadowed by a towering dark figure in the background. *Comedy* shows a spring scene with a blossoming tree, in which a lute-player plays a sweet melody of love; the motif of 'Harmony' (see p. 71) appears in the sky, bestowing her blessing upon everything.

boathouse. Mucha was impressed by Crane's profound understanding of Slavic affairs, while Crane was interested in Mucha's vision of the Slavs in a future Europe. Through Crane, Mucha also met Thomas Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924), then a Princeton scholar with a special interest in Eastern Europe, who was to become the 28th President of the United States in 1913.

Mucha's concept for *The Slav Epic* was being consolidated in the course of 1908–09, and discussions with both Crane and Wilson contributed to the process. After having seen Mucha's preliminary sketches for the first three paintings, Crane finally agreed on Christmas Eve, 1909 to sponsor the project. In February 1910 Mucha wrote to Maruška, then in Prague, to say that he was looking for a "new approach" to painting for this project, and that he "will be able to do something really good, not for the art critic but for the improvement of our Slav souls."

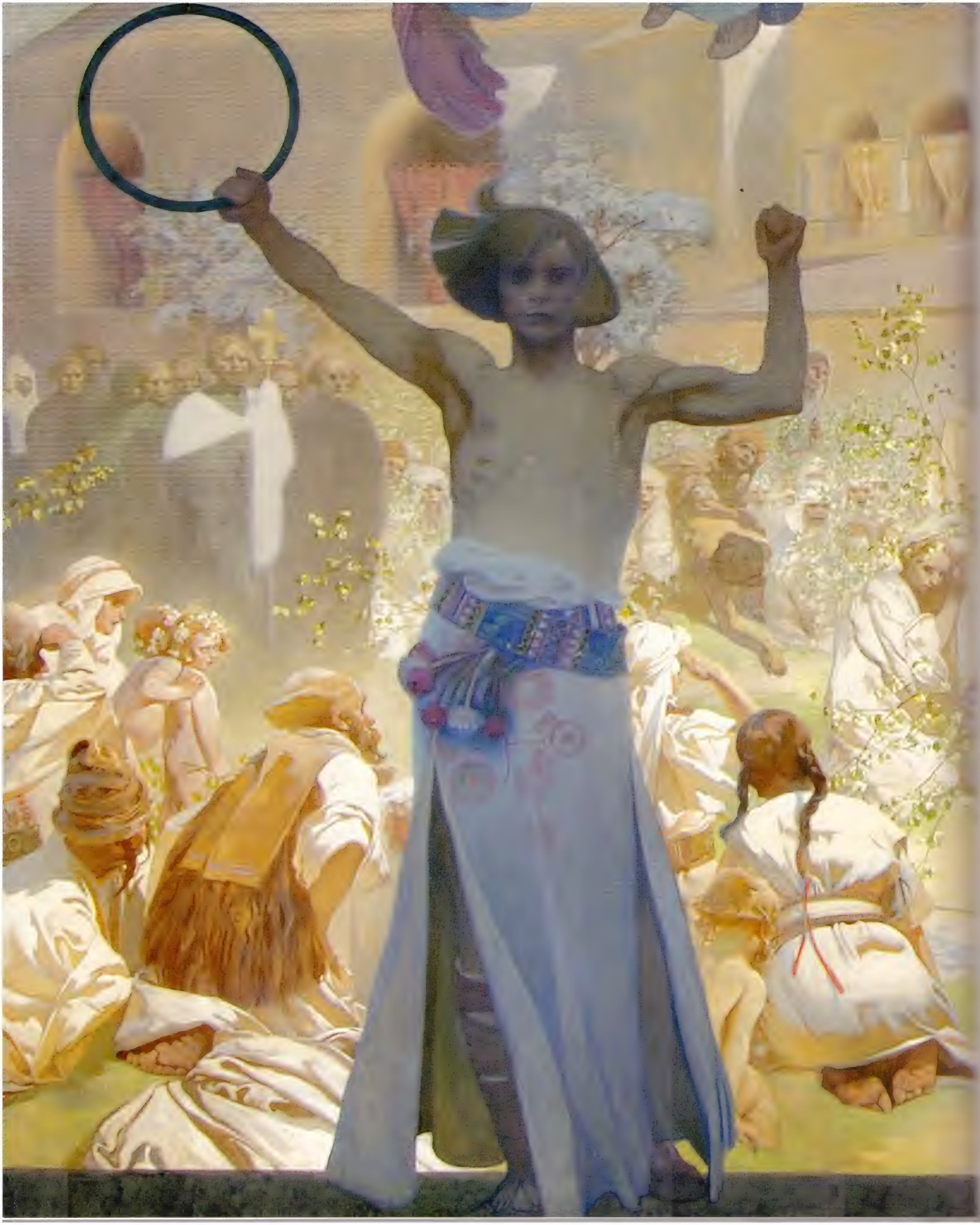

ZALOŽENA
ROKU 1869
SLAVIA
ZALOŽENA
ROKU 1869
VZÁJEMNÉ POJIŠŤOVACÍ BANKA V PRAZE
NEJVĚTŠÍ ČESKÁ POJIŠŤOVNA
UZAVÍRÁ VŠECHNY ZPŮSOBY POJIŠTĚNÍ KAPITÁLŮ, DŮCHODŮ A PENSÍ, PROTI POŽÁRU, ROZBITÍ SKLA KRUPOBITÍ A VLOUPÁNÍ
POSKYTUJE PŮJČKY OSOBNÍ A HYPOTEČNÍ
Mucha

[Mrs] Leslie Carter, 1908
Poster for *Kassa*
Colour lithograph,
209.5 x 78.2 cm / 82½ x 30¾ in.



Slavia Insurance Bank in Prague, 1907
Colour lithograph, 55 x 36 cm / 21⅝ x 14⅛ in.

During his stay in America Mucha was commissioned to design a poster for the Slavia Insurance Bank in Prague, and from this design he developed the composition for the *Slavia* portrait painted the following year (p. 67). In both works the subject is depicted as the Slavic goddess in a ceremonial white gown, holding the circular band symbolising Slavic unity and seated on a metaphorical throne decorated with two doves of peace.



The Slav Epic – a Light of Hope

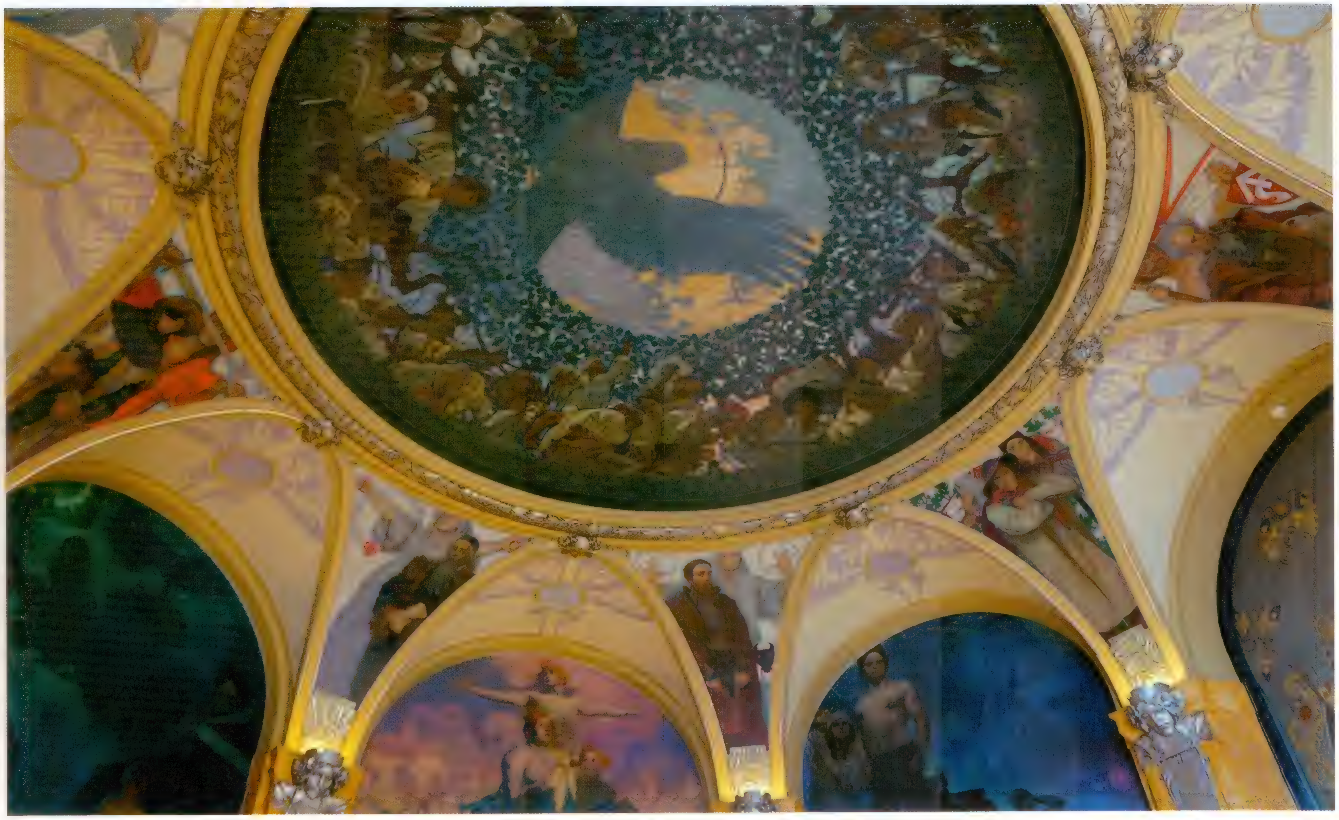
Jaroslava posing for *The Oath of Omladina under the Slavic Linden Tree* (1926; cycle No. 18 from the *Slav Epic*); the canvas of *King Přemysl Otakar II of Bohemia* (1924; cycle No. 5 from the *Slav Epic*) can be seen in the background, *c.* 1925
Photograph from original glass-plate negative

In the spring of 1910 Mucha finally returned to his homeland after an almost continuous absence of 25 years. Because of this, some of his fellow Czech artists regarded Mucha as an 'outsider', despite his occasional visits to family and friends as well as his numerous works reproduced in Czech books and magazines. In 1902, during a trip home on which he accompanied his friend Auguste Rodin (1840–1917) on the occasion of an exhibition of the latter's work in Prague, Mucha urged Czech artists on the need to establish their national identity in art, independent of the foreign models from "Vienna, Munich and Paris". However, the Czechs viewed his remarks as a double standard – criticism from someone who had himself abandoned his homeland for personal success abroad. This unfortunate misunderstanding, which arose from an ironic 'culture' gap – between Mucha's lofty idealism as formed by his expatriate experience, and the perception of insiders as regards the ways Czech life was responding to day-to-day changes – caused animosity among the Prague artists, which was to cast a shadow over Mucha's work in his homeland.

The bitterness that germinated in 1902 developed into a major controversy in 1909, when Mucha was offered the job of decorating the newly built Municipal House (Obecní dům) in Prague. Designed by Antonín Balšánek (1865–1921) and Osvald Polívka (1859–1931), the magnificent Art Nouveau building was conceived as an expression of Czech civic pride, counterbalancing the German House standing nearby. Mucha regarded the project as "a great opportunity to serve his nation", and was willing to undertake the commission for a modest fee, mainly to cover material costs. However, the Prague artists were outraged to hear that this important project had been offered to Mucha the outsider alone. Eventually a compromise was made: while Mucha was given responsibility for the Lord Mayor's Hall, the rest of the work was divided among several well-known Prague artists, including Mikoláš Aleš (1852–1913) and Max Švabinský (1873–1962). In this way Mucha landed his first official work for his nation in 1910, before concentrating on the *Slav Epic* project.

The Lord Mayor's Hall was situated within the domed central façade of the Municipal House, and Mucha's design conceived its circular space in terms of a monument to inspire Slavic unity, through which, in his belief, the restoration of the Czech nation would be realised. Expressing this ideal, Mucha's 11 murals were incorporated into the architectural language of the space (p. 78 top): the

The Slav Epic (cycle No. 3): The Introduction of the Slavonic Liturgy (detail), 1912
Egg tempera and oil on canvas, 610 x 810 cm / 240 x 320 in.
Prague, City Gallery



Municipal House in Prague, 1905–12
Lord Mayor's Hall with Mucha's mural paintings

Mucha working on a mural for the Lord Mayor's Hall at the Municipal House in Prague, *c.* 1910–11

round ceiling painting *Slavic Concord* is 'carried' by the eight pendentives featuring Czech historical characters embodying the civic virtues that constitute the foundations of the nation. Beneath this framework, the powerful figures of Czech youths featured in the 'triptych' send out their patriotic messages. With the coherence of idea and design, as well as the masculinity, which showed a sharp contrast with his Parisian decorative style, Mucha's murals here show the move towards a new phase in his art.

After the completion of his work for the Municipal House in 1911, Mucha was finally able to devote himself properly to *The Slav Epic*, which by this time had been planned as a series of 20 paintings, each with a proposed size of approximately seven by nine metres (the seven largest of the paintings that were actually produced in fact measure approximately six by eight metres). In order to work on such enormous canvases, Mucha rented an apartment and a spacious studio in the Zbiroh Castle in western Bohemia, where he and his family were to stay until 1928. His second child Jiří was born in 1915, and both Jiří and his elder sister Jaroslava were thus to spend their formative years at Zbiroh (see p. 93 right), witnessing the development of *The Slav Epic* and from a young age also posing for their father as models (see p. 77).

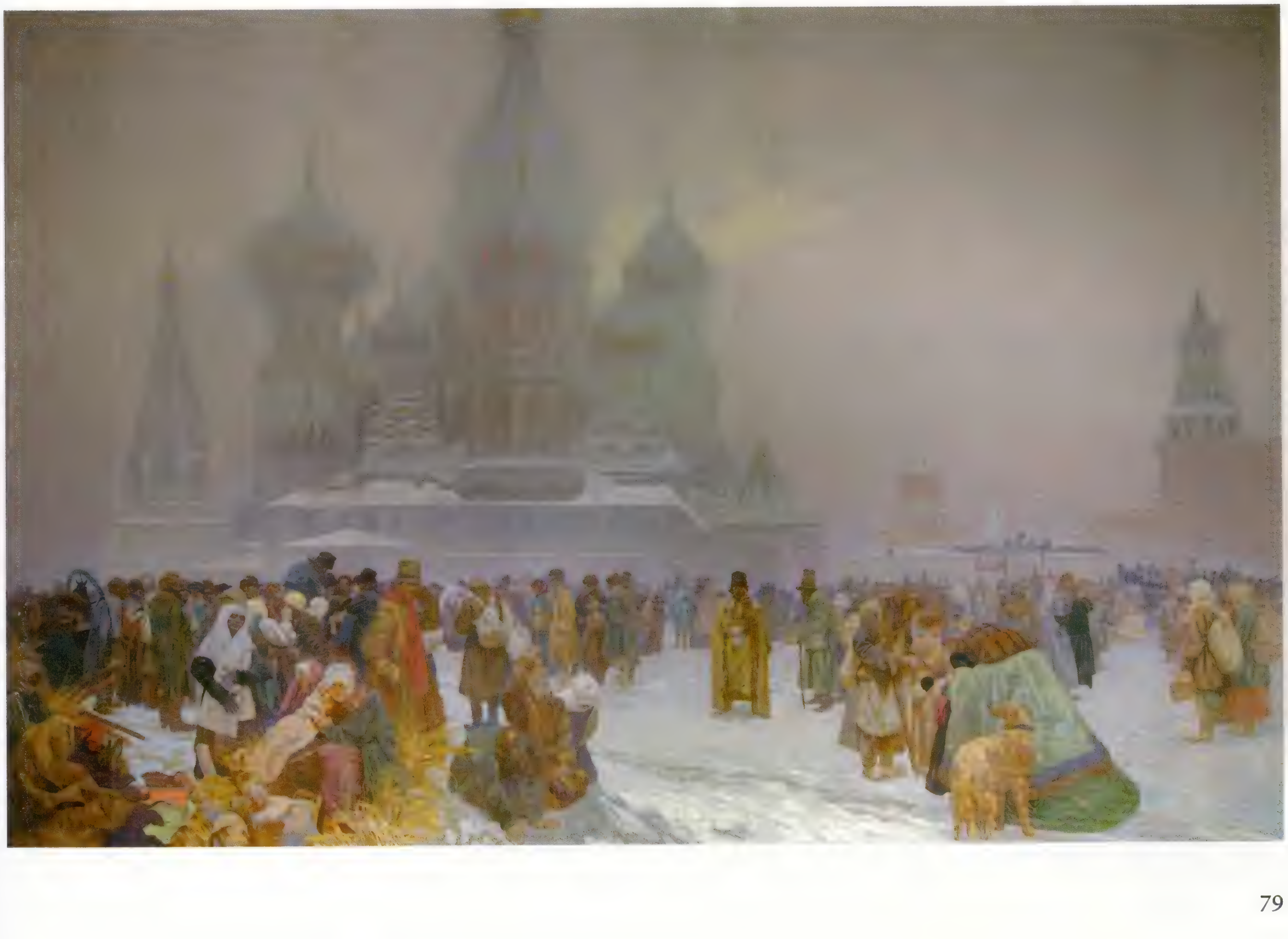
The Slav Epic, which Mucha had envisioned in *fin-de-siècle* Paris as a "light shining into the souls of all people with its clear ideals and burning warnings", was now developing into a monument for Slavic unity – a spiritual home for all Slavs wherein they might learn lessons for the future from their history. Under the contract made between Mucha, Crane and the City of Prague, the *Epic* was to be donated to Prague upon its completion, the city in turn being obliged to provide a dedicated home for it.

For this ambitious pictorial 'thesis', Mucha made thorough preparations. He read a variety of books by historians, including František Palacký (1798–1876), a leading figure of the Czech National Revival and often called 'Father of the Nation'. Mucha also consulted with contemporary scholars such as Ernest Denis (1849–1921), the French expert on Slavic history, as well as Nikodim Kondakov (1844–1925), the Russian specialist on Byzantine art. Furthermore, he made many research trips – to Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Poland, Russia and Greece – sketching, photographing and studying local customs and traditions.

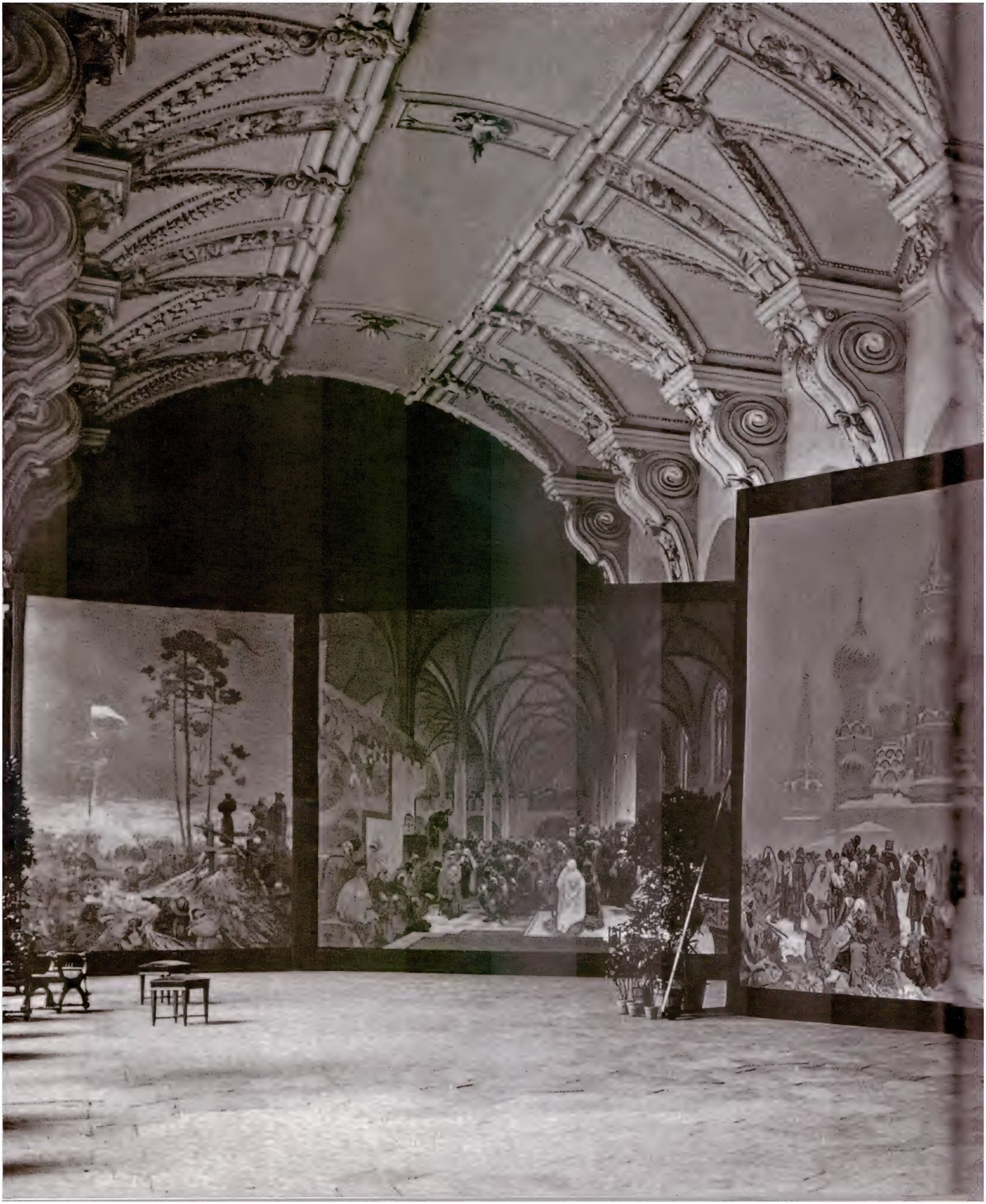
In order to conceptualise *The Slav Epic*, Mucha selected the 20 key historical episodes which, in his view, had influenced the development of Slavic civilisation. Covering a wide range of themes from politics and war to religion, philosophy and culture, 10 episodes were taken from Czech history and the remaining 10 were historical scenes from the past of other Slavic nations. In this selection process, Crane gave free rein to Mucha, except for *The Abolition of Serfdom in Russia* (below), a subject specifically requested by Crane, who also wished the painting to be based on Mucha's "firsthand observations" of the Russian people. To fulfil his sponsor's wish, Mucha visited Russia in 1913 and produced an impressive collection of documentary photographs capturing images of Tsarist Russia in its last year of relative peace.

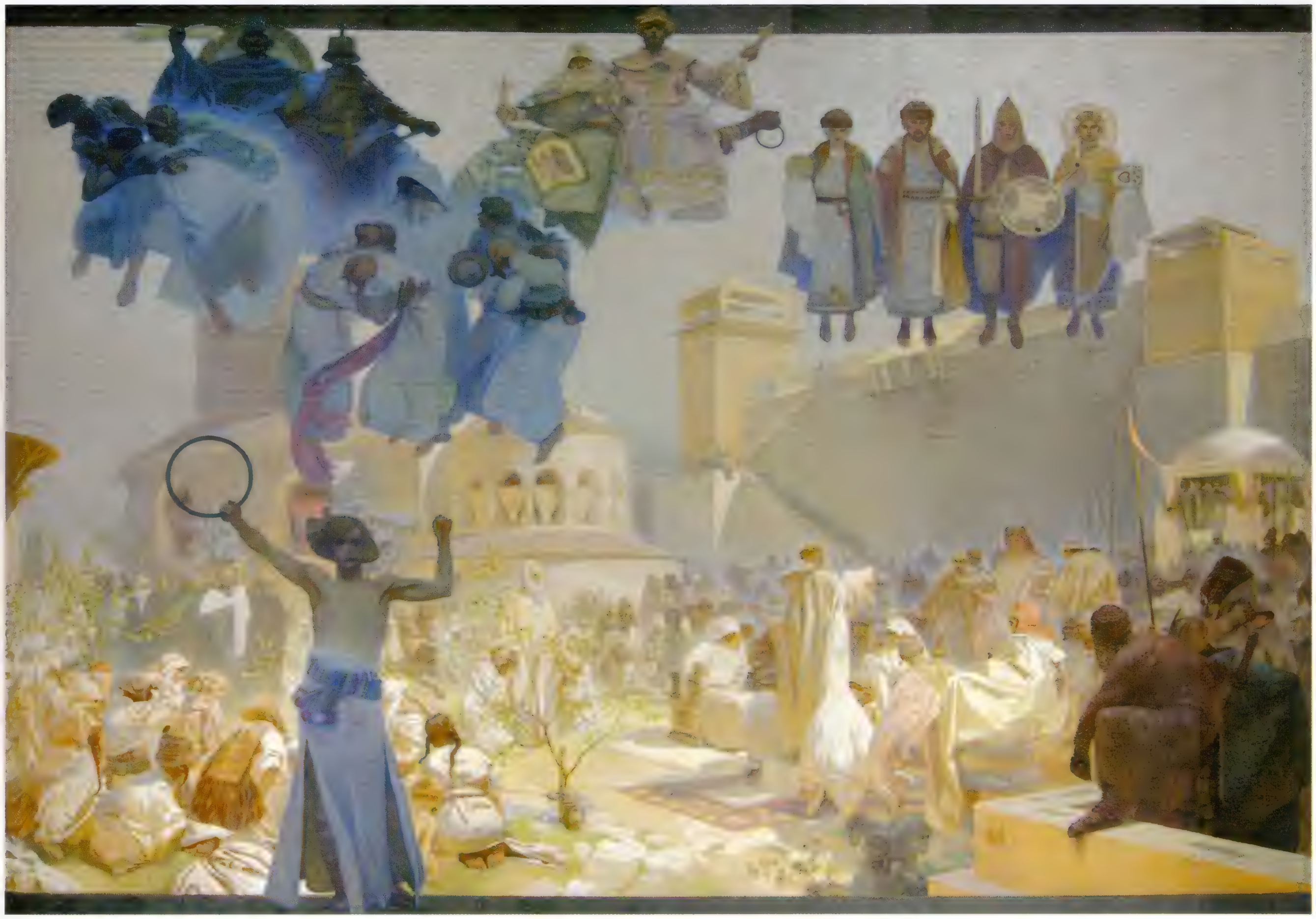
Photography played an important part in the making of *The Slav Epic*, and as a photographer Mucha entered a new stage with this project. His *mise-en-scène* practice became more structured under the strong theatrical direction he employed to build up a coherent drama for each scene (e.g. p. 82 bottom).

PAGES 80–81
Mucha at the first *Slav Epic* exhibition at the Klementinum in Prague, 1919
Photograph from original glass-plate negative



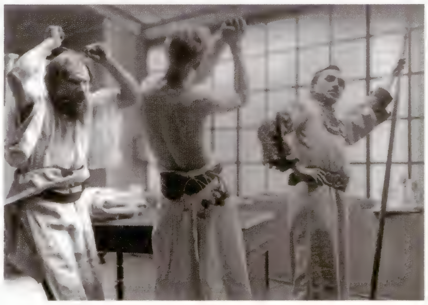
The Slav Epic (cycle No. 19): The Abolition of Serfdom in Russia, 1914
Egg tempera and oil on canvas,
610 x 810 cm / 240 x 320 in.
Prague, City Gallery





The Slav Epic (cycle No. 3): The Introduction of the Slavonic Liturgy, 1912
Egg tempera and oil on canvas,
610 x 810 cm / 240 x 320 in.
Prague, City Gallery

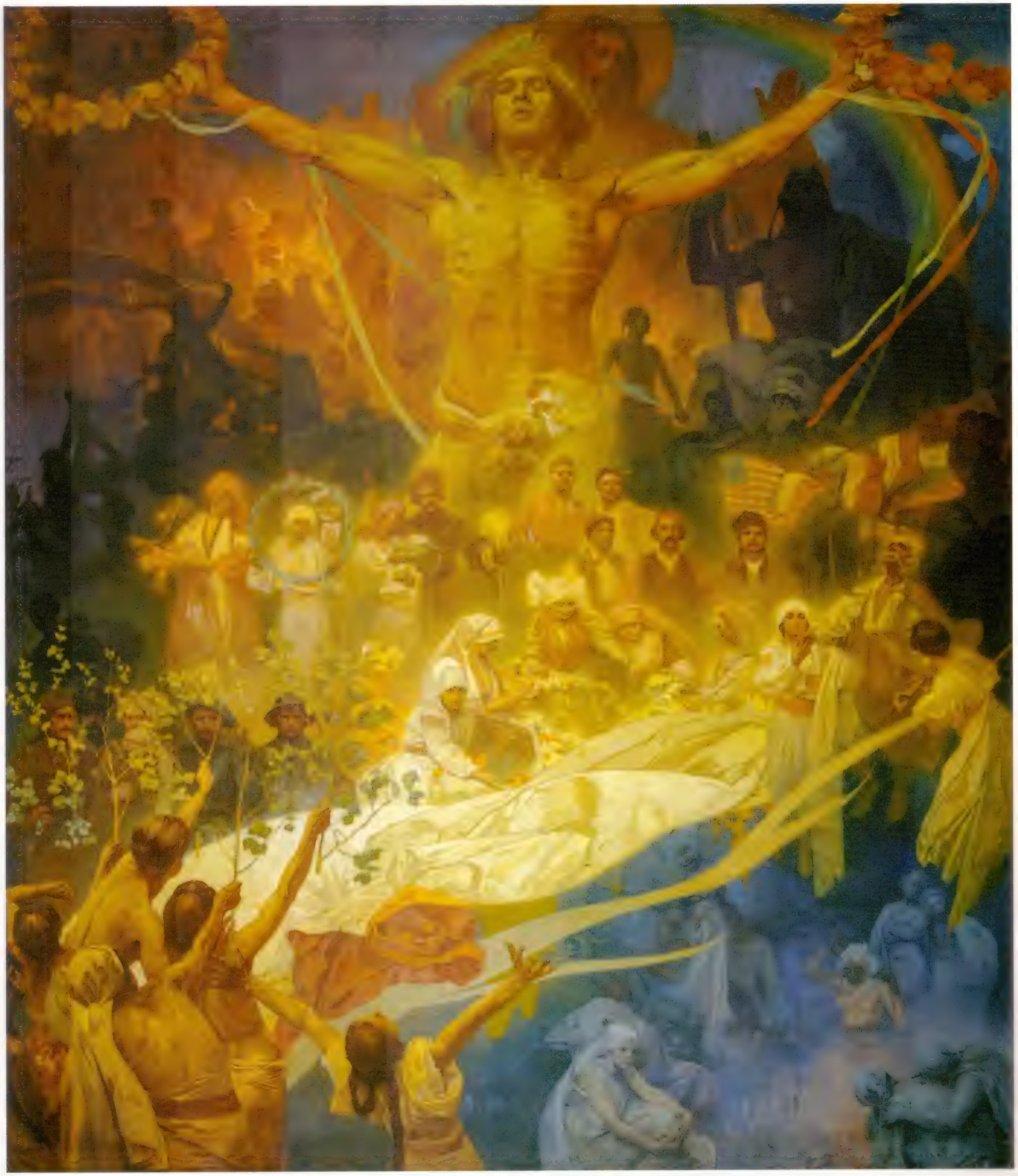
Models posing for *The Slav Epic (cycle No. 2): The Celebration of Svantovít* (1912), *c.* 1911–12
Photograph from original glass-plate negative



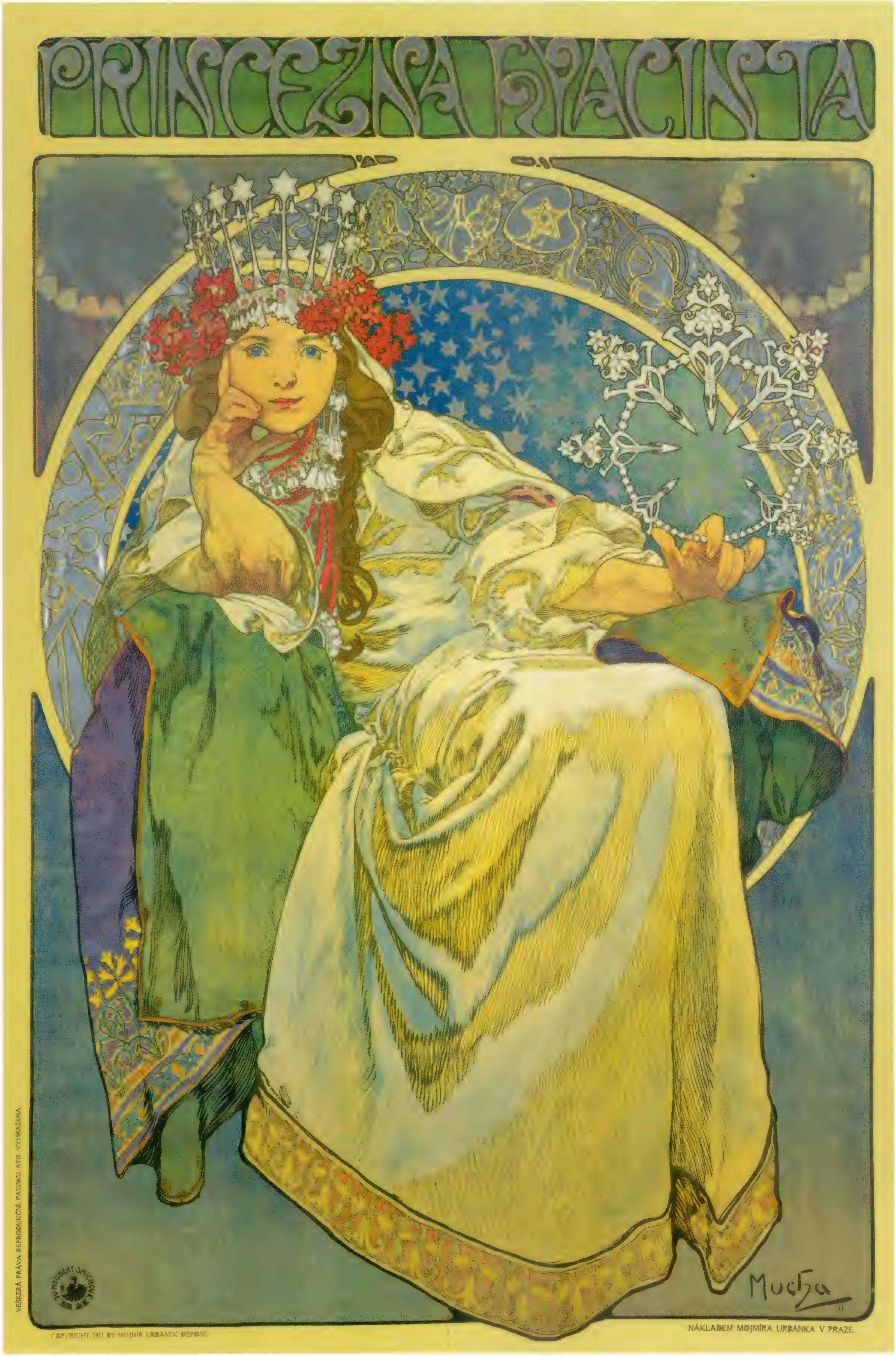
Mucha's photographs of costumed models, many in filmic sequences, indicate the encouragement he gave to the models to move spontaneously and interact with each other rather than to strike a fixed pose individually. Additionally, his research trips generated numerous documentary photographs of people and their lives as well as the events he encountered. Although these photographs were meant to be simply a supplement to his sketches, many of them convey Mucha's warm gaze on human life.

Painting such unusually large canvases posed a variety of technical problems, but Mucha overcame the difficulties with various innovations. First of all, to maintain the rigidity of the canvases, he built perforated metal frames on to which the canvases could be fastened with ropes; they were also fitted with grooved wheels to make them easier to move about. In order to reach the upper parts of the canvases, he constructed metal scaffolding with casters, furnished with multiple platforms. For the painting, Mucha decided to use egg tempera. This fast-drying medium was suitable for his painting method and for achieving a luminous effect, while according to his research on Renaissance fresco paintings, egg tempera would be more durable than oil. However, oil was also used to render details and was mixed with tempera in places to enhance luminosity.

The *Slav Epic* canvases were completed between 1912 and 1926. As a whole, the series expressed Mucha's visionary perspective of Slavic history spanning more than 1,000 years. Beginning with *The Slavs in Their Original Homeland* (1912), which portrayed the ancient Slavs as peaceful but submissive people who



The Slav Epic (cycle No. 20): The Apotheosis of the Slavs: Slavs for Humanity, 1926
Egg tempera and oil on canvas,
480 x 405 cm / 189 x 159 in.
Prague, City Gallery


PRINCEZNA HYACINTA
VEŠKERÁ PRÁVA REPRODUKČNÍ, PATISKU ATD. VYHRAŽENA
V. NEUBERT SMÍCHOV
Mucha
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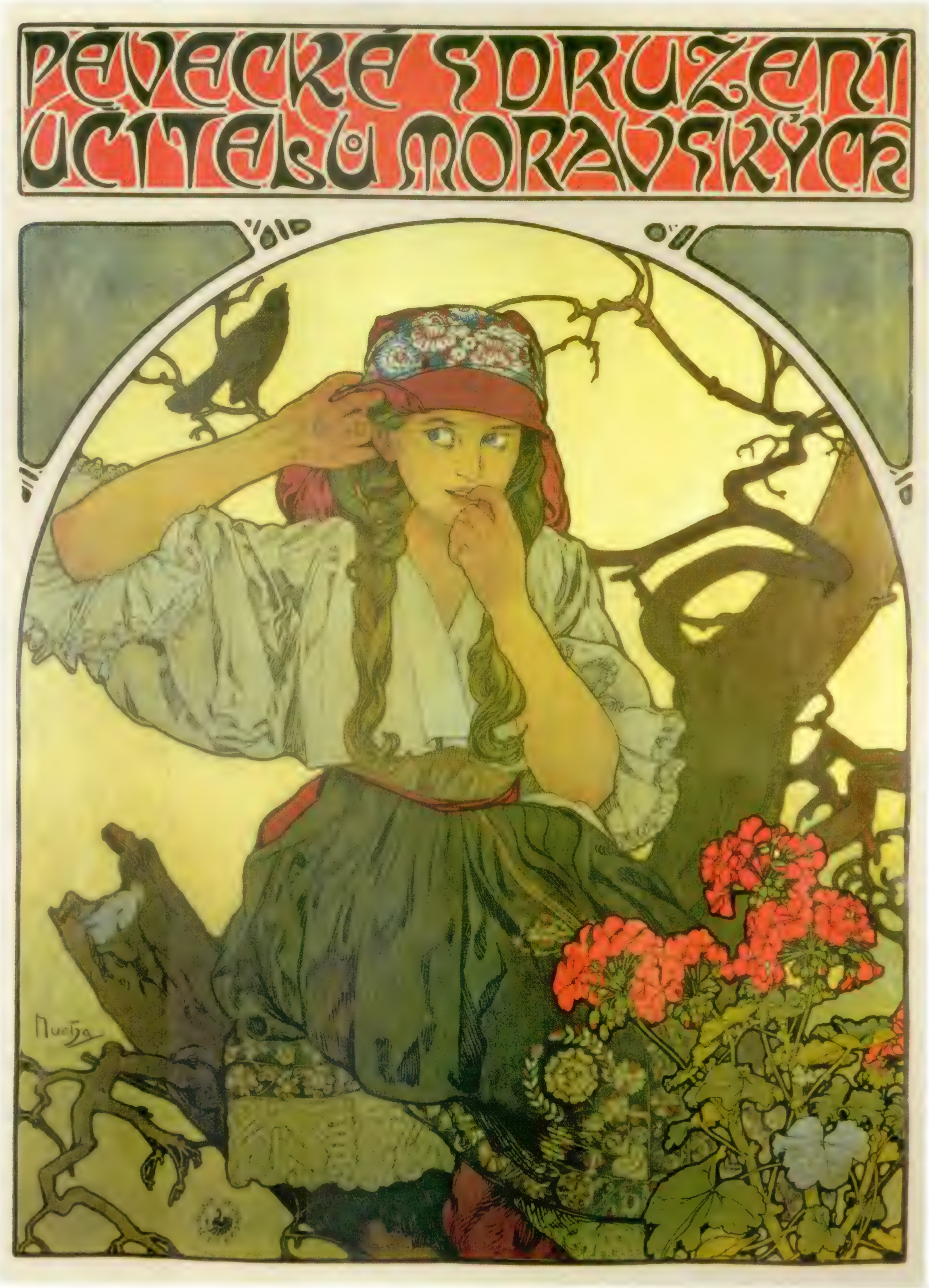


Princess Hyacinth, 1911
Colour lithograph,
125.5 x 83.5 cm / 49½ x 32⅞ in.

The poster features the popular actress Andula Sedláčková (1887–1967) in the title role, a blacksmith's daughter who is transformed into a princess in her father's dream. In this design Mucha used the circular backdrop familiar from his Parisian posters and incorporated the tools of the blacksmith and other symbolic motifs within it to make references to the plot of the ballet.

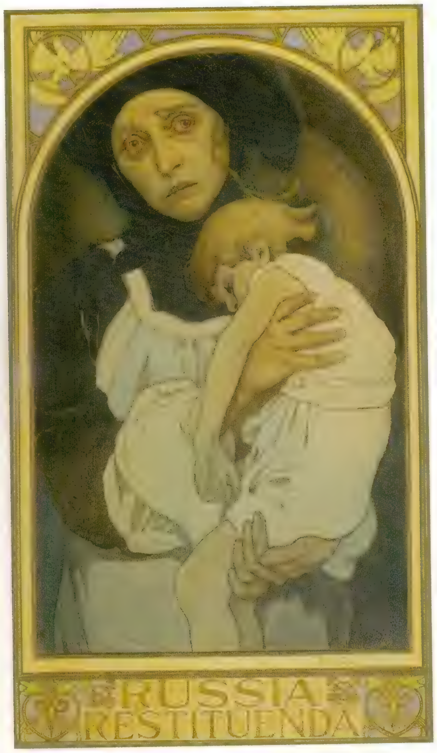
Moravian Teachers' Choir, 1911
Colour lithograph,
106 x 77 cm / 41¾ x 30¼ in.

were defenceless in the face of foreign aggressors, the series culminated in the final painting, *The Apotheosis of the Slavs* (p. 83), which not only depicted the eventual liberation of the Slavs from their oppressors in 1918 but also summed up Mucha's view of Slavic history and its future. While celebrating the independence of the Slavic nations as the apotheosis of their history in the centre of the composition, Mucha surrounded this contemporary event with a vortex of human figures representing the past as the basis of the present. Furthermore, he expressed his vision for the future role of the Slavs with the subtitle 'Slavs for Humanity' – the message is embodied in the figure of the girl emerging above the present, who guards in her hands the illuminating light of wisdom, which would "lead to the goodness and happiness of the rest of humanity".

While he was working on the *Slav Epic* canvases, Mucha declined any commercial work but still accepted commissions for causes that were close to his heart. He designed posters to promote Czech cultural or philanthropic events, such as the ballet-pantomime *Princess Hyacinth* at the National Theatre in Prague (p. 84), concerts by the *Moravian Teachers' Choir* in 1911 (p. 85), a lottery organised to raise funds for Czech schoolchildren in 1912 (p. 87), as well as the Sokol's 'All-Slavic' sporting festivals in 1912 and 1926. He also produced several symbolic paintings to inspire Slavic unity (e.g. p. 89), featuring images of Slavic women in traditional folk costumes, which were, in Mucha's view, not merely costumes but "the soul of the nation". When the independent state of Czechoslovakia was formed in 1918, Mucha was eager to serve his new nation and designed the first Czechoslovak stamps and banknotes as well as a variety of state paraphernalia, including the national emblem and police uniform, for which he declined to accept any payment.

During this period, Mucha continued to practise as a Freemason, despite its having been banned under the Austro-Hungarian Empire and carrying the death penalty in wartime. After the dissolution of the Empire, Mucha played a leading role in the re-establishment of Freemasonry in the new state and in 1919 was instrumental in founding the first Czech-speaking lodge in Prague, Jan Amos Komenský, named after the 17th-century Moravian educator (1592–1670) who was known as 'the Father of Modern Education'. In 1923, Mucha was elected Sovereign Grand Commander of the Czech Supreme Council of Freemasons (see p. 94). He contributed designs for insignia and other paraphernalia for various Masonic lodges and expressed his humanitarian ideals through his Masonic publications, lobbying activities and his art. Two works from the early 1920s, the poster *Russia Restituenda* (above left) and the painting *Woman in the Wilderness* (p. 91), reflect Mucha's response to the humanitarian crisis in Russia at the time, following the Bolshevik Revolution.

In September 1928, Mucha and Charles Crane officially donated the entire cycle of *The Slav Epic* to the City of Prague, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the founding of the new state of Czechoslovakia. In marking the moment, Mucha addressed his nation: "I am convinced that the development of every nation can only be successful if it grows organically and uninterruptedly from its own roots, and the knowledge of its past is indispensable for the preservation of that continuity … I wanted to talk in my own way to the spirit of the nation … The purpose of my work was never to destroy but to construct, to link up, because we all must hope that humanity will draw [closer] together and this will be easier the more they understand each other. I will be happy if it falls to my lot to have helped with my modest strength towards this understanding, at least in our Slav family."

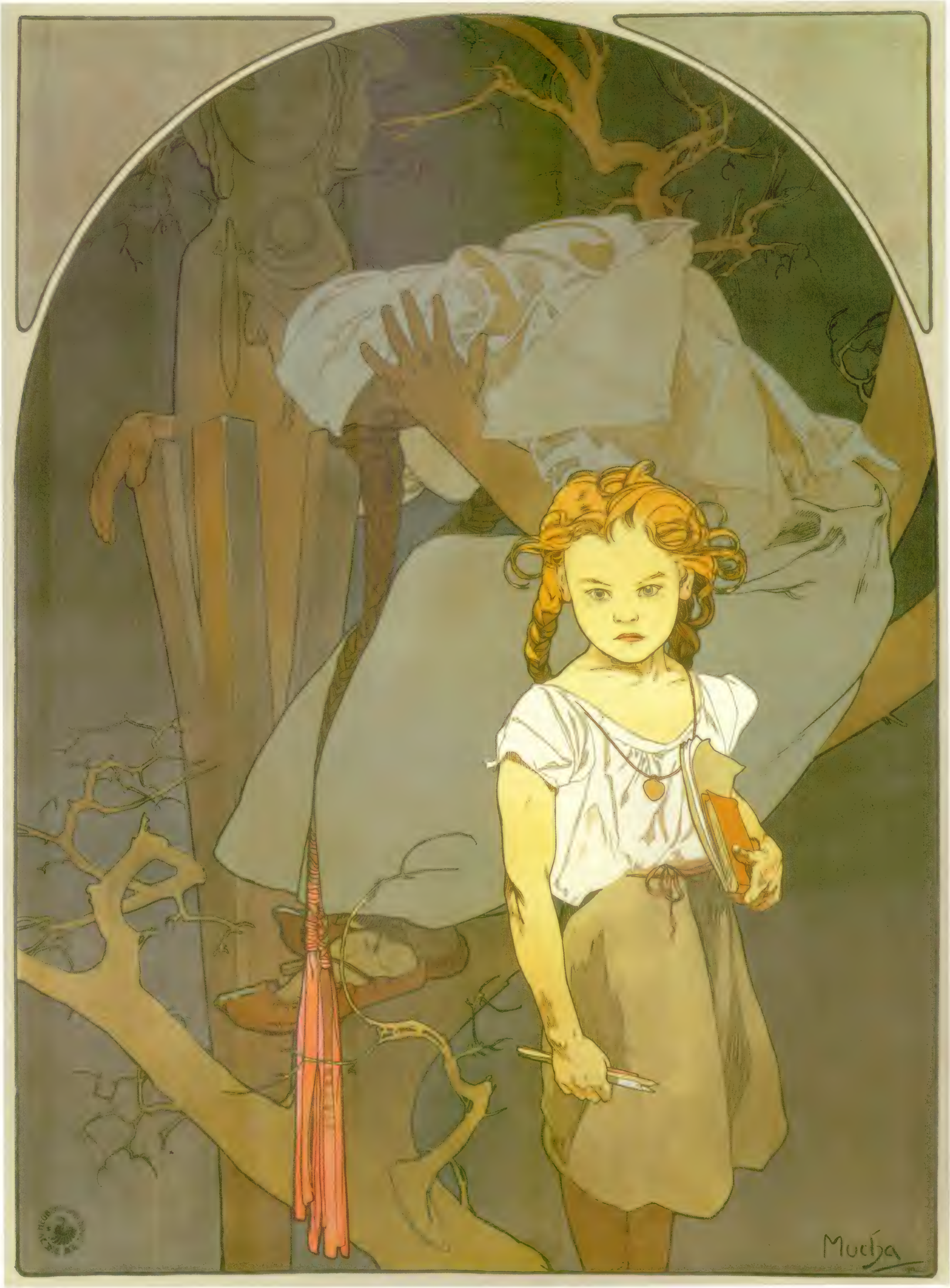


Russia Restituenda* *[Russia Must Recover], 1922
Colour lithograph,
79.7 x 45.7 cm / 31⅜ x 18 in.

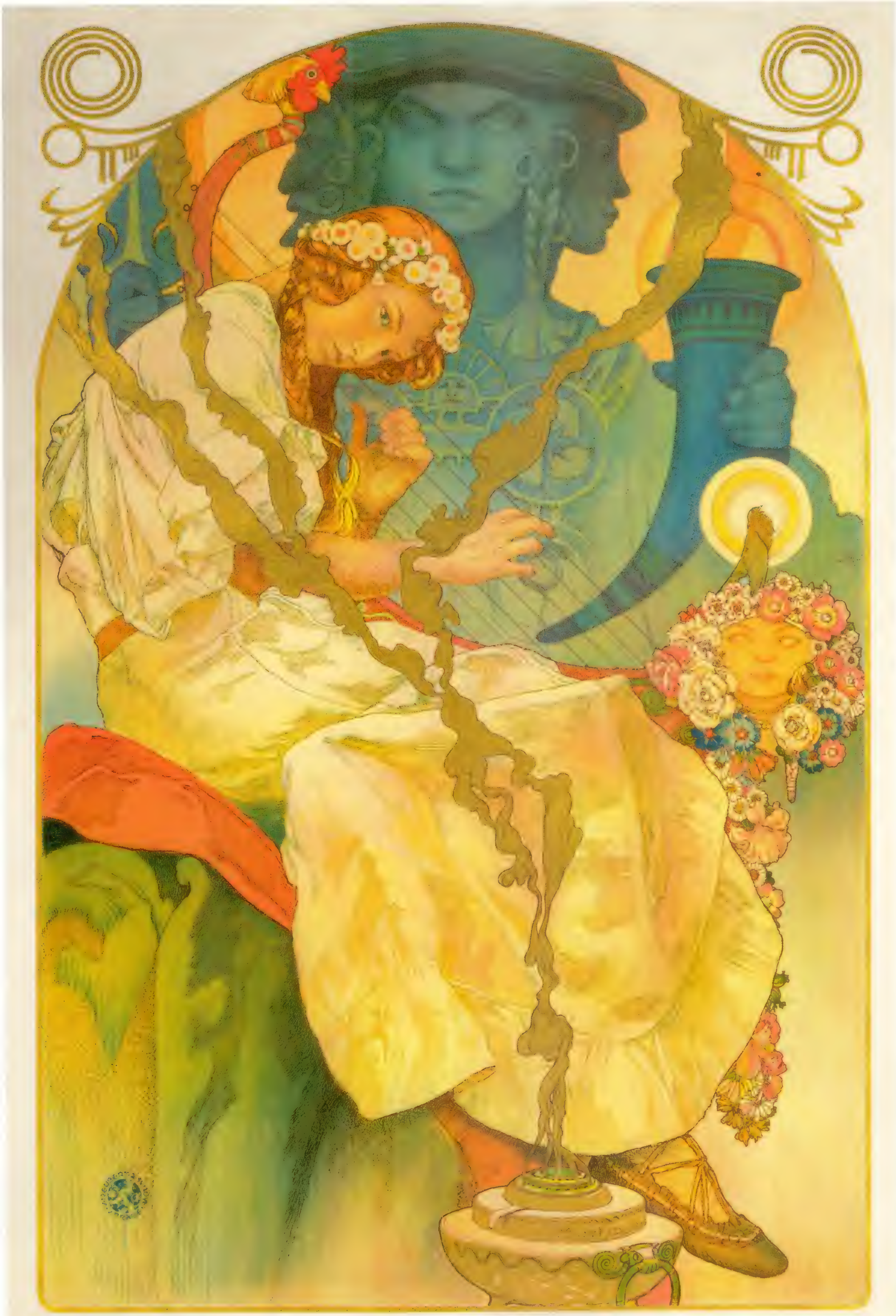
This poster served as a plea for help for starving children in the aftermath of the Russian Civil War (1917–22), which paralysed the country and killed millions through widespread disease and starvation. A distressed peasant woman is shown holding a dying child – the image adapted from Christian iconography of the Mother and Child – and the poster was designed specifically to evoke compassion. For the message at the bottom Mucha chose to use Latin, a universal language, to indicate the impartiality and internationalism of this humanitarian effort.

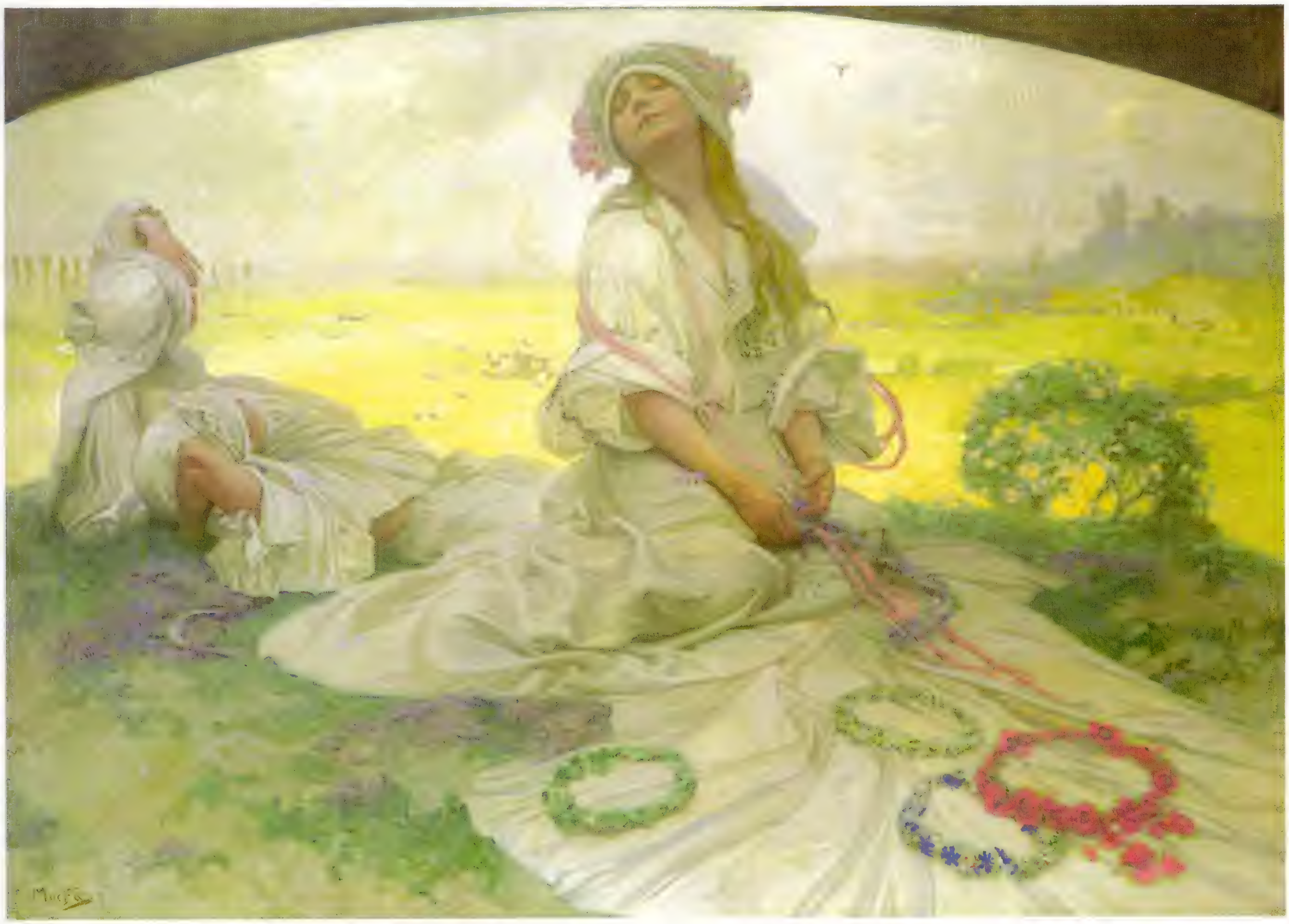
Lottery of the Union of Southwestern Moravia, 1912
Colour lithograph,
128 x 95 cm / 50⅜ x 37⅜ in.

Under the Austrian regime, the Czech language could only be taught in private schools run by local communities. This poster was designed to promote a lottery for raising funds for such schools. It shows a little schoolgirl staring accusingly at the viewer while Mother Nation crouches in despair on a withered tree, with the poster thus intended to make an emotional appeal for the survival of the nation's education and culture.



Mucha





In Mucha's lifetime, *The Slav Epic* was exhibited in Prague twice – in 1919 (see pp. 80–81) and 1928, and it also proved to be the spark for a prolonged controversy. While the 'progressive' Czech artists regarded Mucha's 'historical' paintings as anachronistic, many critics failed to look into his philosophical intention, considering his 'nationalistic' sentiment to be irrelevant after the nation's independence in 1918. Furthermore, in 1933 the *Slav Epic* canvases were rolled up and put into storage after the exhibitions in Brno and Pilsen; Mucha and Crane's contract with the municipal authorities did not specify a binding date for providing the requested permanent home for *The Slav Epic*. Many of the negative comments about the *Epic* persisted after World War II under the Communist regime and throughout the Cold War era until the Velvet Revolution of 1989; it was only during the 1990s that Mucha's homeland began to look at the meaning of *The Slav Epic* in a new light.

In 1933, celebrations for the 15th anniversary of the formation of Czechoslovakia were diminished by a looming sense of foreboding. In Germany, Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) was consolidating his power, and in Czechoslovakia Nazism was spreading among the Sudeten Germans. Amid growing anxiety, Mucha decided to make a large oil painting depicting the horrors of war, featuring the motif of the girl guarding the illuminating light from the last painting of *The Slav Epic*, *The Apotheosis of the Slavs: Slavs for Humanity* (p. 83). The project never came to fruition but in the surviving oil study, entitled *The Light of Hope*

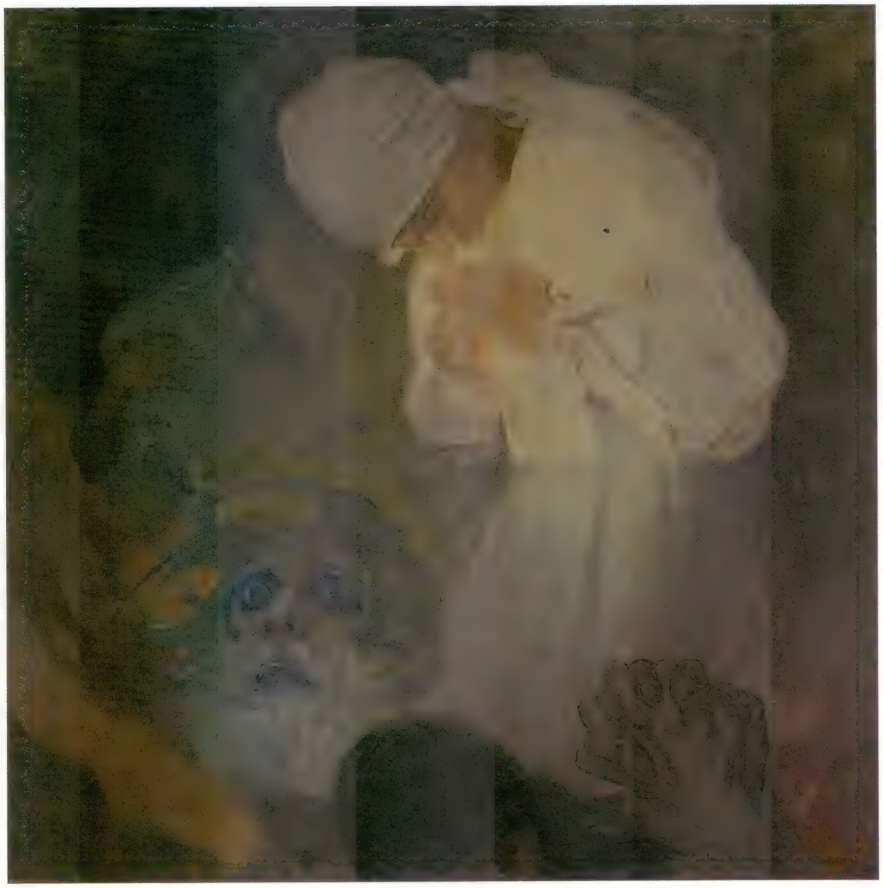
Song of Bohemia (Our Song), 1918
Oil on canvas, 100 x 138 cm / 39½ x 54½ in.

At the time Mucha produced this painting, he could perhaps sense his dream coming true, since in June 1918 the Allied governments officially recognised the Czechoslovaks' national aspiration. The painting was reproduced in the July 10, 1918 issue of *Zlatá Praha* under the title *Our Song*.

The Slav Epic, 1928
Colour lithograph (upper sheet of the two-part poster), 123 x 81.2 cm / 48⅜ x 32 in.

This poster was designed for the exhibition of the completed *Slav Epic* at the Trade Fair Palace in Prague in 1928, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the creation of Czechoslovakia. It features the motif of the allegory of music taken from *The Oath of Omladina under the Slavic Linden Tree* (1926) (see p. 77).

The Light of Hope, 1933
Oil on canvas,
96.2 x 90.7 cm / 37⅞ x 35¾ in.



"The artist must remain faithful to himself and to his national roots."
— ALPHONSE MUCHA

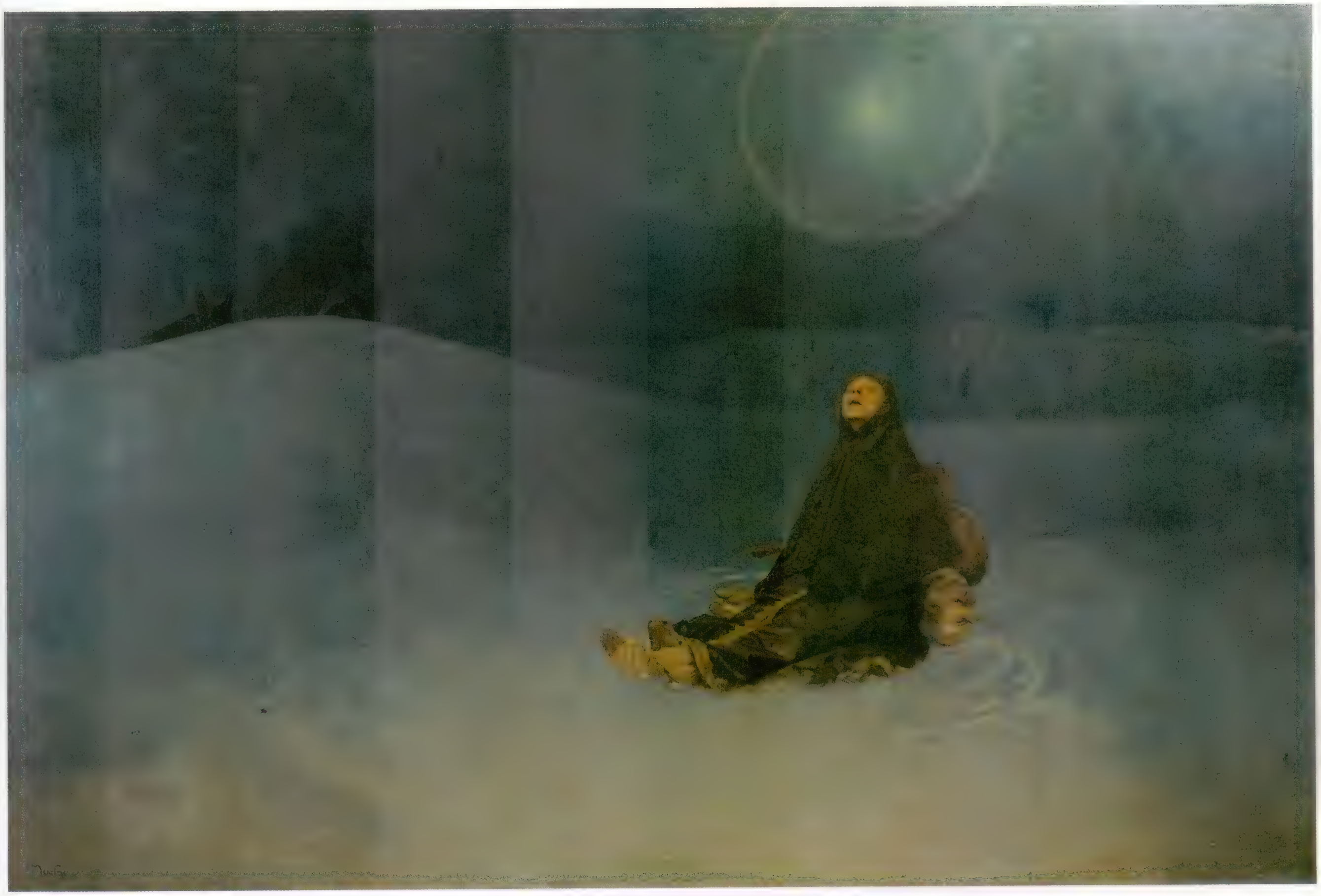
(above), the girl's figure clearly embodies Mucha's pacifist message, standing out from the darkness within which terrified individuals flee from the horrors of war.

In 1936, Mucha's artistic achievement was celebrated in Paris by a large retrospective, organised by the Musée du Jeu de Paume, which also included work by his old Czech friend, František Kupka (1871–1957). Mucha was represented by 139 works, including three canvases from *The Slav Epic*. However, the political situation in Europe was developing rapidly in the direction Mucha had most feared. Acutely sensing the possibility of another war, the 76-year-old Mucha launched into a new project: a triptych depicting *The Age of Reason*, *The Age of Wisdom* and *The Age of Love* (1936–38). For this work he intended to use canvases as large as those of *The Slav Epic* and wished to make the triptych a monument for all mankind. The themes addressed here – Reason, Wisdom and Love – were, in Mucha's view, the three key attributes of humanity. According to his notes he considered Reason and Love to be two extremes that could only be balanced through Wisdom, and thus believed that the harmony of the three elements would contribute to the progress of mankind. Unfortunately, Mucha did not live long enough to complete this project.

On the morning of March 15, 1939, Mucha saw German troops marching through Prague; the following day, Hitler proclaimed the establishment of the German Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia at Prague Castle. Shortly afterwards, Mucha was arrested by the Gestapo as a prominent Czech patriot and Freemason, and although he was released after several days of questioning, his spirit was broken and his health was suffering. Mucha died of pneumonia on July 14, 1939. Despite the banning of public gatherings and speeches, Mucha's funeral was attended by a huge crowd of people – both admirers and opponents. Alphonse Mucha was laid to rest in the Slavín Monument – the 'Pantheon' of great Czechs established in 1893 in Prague's Vyšehrad cemetery. Surmounted by a statue of the Genius Patriae, the monument carries the inscription: "Although dead, they still speak to us."

Woman in the Wilderness, 1923
Oil on canvas, 201.5 x 299.5 cm / 79½ x 118 in.

Mucha produced this symbolic painting in response to the sufferings endured by the Russian people after the Bolshevik Revolution. The picture shows a lone peasant woman stranded in the dark snowfields, with a pack of wolves appearing from behind the hill. Mucha expressed the helplessness of the Russian people's situation and their sorrow through the figure of the woman stretching her hands out to accept her inevitable fate.



Alphonse Mucha 1860–1939

Chronology

1860 Born in Ivančice in South Moravia on July 24 to the family of Ondřej Mucha, a court usher.

1872 Wins a choral scholarship to the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Brno, the capital of Moravia, where he also attends the Slovanské Gymnasium. Meets the future composer Leoš Janáček.

1877 Returns to Ivančice, where his father finds him work as a court clerk.

1878 Mucha's application to the Prague Academy of Fine Arts is turned down. Continues to work at the courtroom, while involved in amateur theatre groups as well as contributing designs for local patriotic organisations and magazines.

1879 Goes to Vienna late in the year to work as an apprentice scene painter for the firm of Kautsky-Brioschi-Burghardt.

1881 Begins taking photographs with a borrowed camera around this time. At the end of the year, dismissed from work after a major fire burnt down the Ringtheater, his employer's best customer.

1882 Early on goes to Mikulov, where he earns a living by painting portraits. By 1883, meets the local landowner, Count Eduard Khuen-Belasi, who employs Mucha to decorate his residence, Emmahof Castle (see p. 10), and later Gandegg Castle in the Tyrol for his brother Count Egon.

1885 Begins studies at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts, with the sponsorship of Count Eduard. Joins the Škréta Club, a society of Czech and Slavic art students in Munich. Commissioned to paint an altarpiece, *Saints Cyril and Methodius*, for the Church of St. John of Nepomuk for a Czech community in Pisek, North Dakota, USA (p. 12).

1887 Moves to Paris to study at the Académie Julian, sponsored by Count Eduard Khuen-Belasi.

1888 Enters the Académie Colarossi.

1889 The Count's sponsorship ends; begins to work as an illustrator for publishers in Paris and Prague.

1890 Moves to lodgings above Madame Charlotte Caron's Crèmerie at 13, rue de la Grande Chaumière.

1891 Meets Paul Gauguin, who stays briefly at Mme Charlotte's before his first trip to Tahiti. Begins working for Parisian publisher Armand Colin, who commissions Mucha to illustrate *Scènes et Épisodes de l'Histoire d'Allemagne* by Charles Seignobos (p. 16).

1892 Begins to give drawing lessons at his studio, which later develop into the 'Cours Mucha' at the Académie Colarossi.

1893 Purchases his own camera around this time. Gauguin returns from Tahiti and shares Mucha's studio at 8, rue de la Grande Chaumière.

1894 Awarded a '*mention honorable*' at the Paris Salon for oil studies for *Scènes et Épisodes de l'Histoire d'Allemagne*. Meets Swedish dramatist and writer August Strindberg, who is among the *habitués* at Madame Charlotte's until 1896. Late in December, designs his first poster for Sarah Bernhardt, *Gismonda* (pp. 23, 25).

1895 Signs a six-year contract with Bernhardt to design posters, stage sets and costumes for her productions. Meets the Lumière brothers, pioneers of film-making.

ABOVE LEFT
Paul Gauguin playing Mucha's harmonium at his studio in the rue de la Grande Chaumière, Paris, 1893

ABOVE RIGHT
Maruška with daughter Jaroslava (left) and son Jiří (right) at Zbiroh Castle, western Bohemia, *c.* 1917

OPPOSITE
Self-portrait in a Russian 'rubashka' shirt at his studio in the rue de la Grande Chaumière, Paris, early 1890s

1896 Joins the Salon des Cent, the group of artists promoted by *La Plume* magazine. Signs an exclusive contract with Parisian printer F. Champenois. Moves to a larger studio and apartment at 6, rue du Val-de-Grâce. Designs his first series of *panneaux décoratifs*, *The Seasons* (pp. 38–39). Participates in the Exhibition of Artistic Posters in Reims.

1897 First two solo exhibitions held in Paris at the Bodinière Gallery and then at the Salon des Cent.

1898 Initiated into the Grand Orient de France in Paris, the oldest Masonic organisation in France. Begins teaching at Whistler's Académie Carmen.

1899 Receives commissions from the Austro-Hungarian government for the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900, including murals for the Bosnia-Herzegovina Pavilion (see pp. 54–59). During his research trip to the Balkans for this work the first seeds of the *Slav Epic* project are sown. *Le Pater* is published in Paris (pp. 52, 53).

1900 For his contribution to the 1900 Paris Exposition, awarded honours by both the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the French government (1901).

1901 Elected a member of the Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts. Designed by Mucha, Georges Fouquet's new jewellery shop opens in the rue Royale, Paris (pp. 60–61).

1902 Accompanies Auguste Rodin to Prague and Moravia on the occasion of the latter's exhibition in Prague. *Documents décoratifs* is published in Paris (pp. 62, 63).

1903 Meets a Czech art student and his future wife Marie (Maruška) Chytilová, who briefly studies at the Académie Colarossi and under Mucha.

1904 First visit to the US: paints society portraits following introductions by Baroness Adèle von Rothschild; meets Charles Richard Crane, a wealthy businessman from Chicago and Mucha's future sponsor for the *Slav Epic* project.

1905 Makes two more visits to the US, working on commissions and teaching at the New York School of Applied Design for Women. *Figures décoratives* is published in Paris.

1906 Marries Maruška in Prague on June 10. Fourth trip to the US, accompanied by Maruška. Mucha begins teaching at the Art Institute of Chicago.

1908 Commissioned to decorate the new German Theatre in New York (see p. 73). Brings up the idea of his *Slav Epic* project to Crane for the first time.

1909 Birth of daughter Jaroslava in New York. Summer vacation with his family in Bohemia and Moravia. Makes his fifth trip to the US: Crane agrees to finance Mucha's *Slav Epic.*

1910 Returns to Bohemia, where Mucha is engaged in the decoration of the Municipal House in Prague (see p. 78).

1911 Moves to Zbiroh Castle in western Bohemia to concentrate on the *Slav Epic* project.

1912 Travels through the Dalmatian region, accompanied by Maruška and his Moravian painter friend Joža Uprka. Completes the first three canvases of *The Slav Epic.*

1913 Sixth visit to the US. Makes an extensive research trip to Poland and Russia for *The Slav Epic.*

1915 Son Jiří is born in Prague.

1918 The independent state of Czechoslovakia is created as a result of the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Designs first postage stamps and banknotes for the new state.

1919 First *Slav Epic* exhibition at the Klementinum in Prague shows five canvases (see pp. 80–81), which are then sent to America for exhibitions. Mucha's seventh and last visit to the US.

1920 Mucha's *Slav Epic* exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago attracts 200,000 visitors.

1921 Retrospective at the Brooklyn Museum in New York features the five *Slav Epic* canvases, and is visited by 600,000 people. Mucha returns to Prague.

1923 Elected Sovereign Grand Commander of the Czech Supreme Council of Freemasons (right).

1924 Research trip to the Balkans for the remaining *Slav Epic* paintings. Publishes *Svobodné Zednářství* [Freemasonry] in Prague.

1928 The complete cycle of *The Slav Epic* is officially presented to the City of Prague by Mucha and Crane and is shown at the Trade Fair Palace in Prague.

1930 *The Slav Epic* is shown at the Exhibition Palace in Brno.

1931 Commissioned to design a stained-glass window to be donated by the Slavia Insurance Bank to St. Vitus Cathedral, Prague (see p. 13).

1932 Moves to Nice, living there for two years.

1933 Mucha exhibitions held in Pilsen, Hradec Králové and Chrudim.

1934 Promoted to Officier of the Légion d'honneur by the French government. Publishes *O Lásce, Rozumu a Moudrosti* [On Love, Reason and Wisdom] in Prague.

1936 Retrospectives at the Musée du Jeu de Paume, Paris, and the Moravian Museum of Decorative Arts, Brno. Begins to work on the triptych (unrealised) *The Age of Reason, The Age of Wisdom* and *The Age of Love.*

1939 German invasion of Czechoslovakia: Mucha is one of the first to be arrested and interrogated by the Gestapo on account of his Masonic activities. Although released after several days of questioning, his health is impaired by the ordeal. Mucha dies in Prague on July 14 and is buried at Vyšehrad Cemetery.

Self-portrait in formal Masonic regalia, as Sovereign Grand Commander of the Czech Supreme Council of Freemasons, 1923

Mucha in Red Square in Moscow, making sketches for *The Slav Epic: The Abolition of Serfdom in Russia* (1914), 1913

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